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*Stories behind the  
World's Great Music*

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by SIGMUND SPAETH

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# *Stories behind the World's Great Music*

By SIGMUND SPAETH



*New York WHITTLESEY HOUSE London  
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To K. L. S.

*Appreciatively*



## *Preface*

A large, ornate initial letter 'J' with decorative flourishes extending upwards and to the right.

T WAS fun to write this book. I am surprised that no one has thought of writing it before. I would not have thought of it myself, except for some rather insistent requests from libraries, book and music stores, and various individuals, including a practical publisher.

My contention has always been that music itself is more important than any person creating or interpreting it, just as baseball is more important than Dizzy Dean or even Babe Ruth. And yet, after discovering that many composers of music actually led more interesting lives than such athletic heroes, I am willing to admit that people could easily become fascinated by the adventures of a Beethoven or a Wagner or a Schubert or a Chopin, without being previously aware of just what they did. Therefore this book is written for a much wider circle than that limited company that we call "music lovers."

The material, of course, is unlimited, and it would have been foolish to attempt exhausting or even faintly fatiguing the

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*subject. All that can be done in one volume like this is to touch the high spots and draw attention to the most interesting and exciting events connected with outstanding compositions. I have made no effort to appraise or comment upon the music itself, merely referring to what has become established as important, and assuming that any reader can easily become familiar with any of the music mentioned. Practically all of it, including even some of the obscure folk-music, is now available on phonograph records, which I still consider the best possible aid to a musical background.*

*But for once I do not insist that my readers listen to a lot of music. I want them to read these stories as they would read fiction, and I have not hesitated to include some which may actually be fiction, simply because they are good stories. As far as possible, however, I have indicated what is fact and what is fancy.*

*A great deal of beautiful music has been written for no particular reason, and without any special background of the romantic sort. Many such pieces are not even mentioned, and, where their story consists of little more than a date and the name of a place, these details have been covered as briefly as possible. The surprising thing is that so many great compositions offer interesting stories of their creation, which may be considered authentic.*

*It is surprising also to find how many composers died young, although generally this can be explained on the simple grounds*

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of starvation and bad living conditions. Almost equally surprising is the number of musicians who lived to an almost overripe old age.

The great composers were all human beings, with the good and bad qualities of their more prosaic fellow men. They were all distinctly aware of their genius, but took different methods of impressing the fact on others. Like most artists of any kind, they were full of absurdities of all kinds, with a full share of that complacent vanity that is both irritating and incomprehensibly fascinating to the layman.

But it would be a mistake to think of all composers as vain and absurd and selfish and unreasonable. There were simple and kindly and considerate and modest men among them, as well as mean and vicious and irascible and unmannerly ones. The varieties of human character appear among composers just as they do among cobblers and ditch diggers and manufacturers and salesmen and clergymen.

This book has required a lot of research, and its materials can be found scattered through the dictionaries, the histories, the biographies, and the program notes of other writers, often in far greater detail. I can only say that it has been hard work as well as fun to go through all these sources of information, and that perhaps the hardest part of the job was to leave out things that could be of interest only to scholars and critics and confirmed music-fans. The bibliography at the close indicates to some extent what is available to those who want to make a

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*closer study of the backgrounds of musical composition. Translated quotations are usually taken from these common sources, with occasional touches of my own.*

*I want to express my thanks to various members of the staff of G. Schirmer and of the public libraries of New York for their generous help, and also to my good friend Katharine Lane Spaeth, a fast and accurate reader and a grand reporter. Now go on with the stories.*

SIGMUND SPAETH

WESTPORT, CONN.,  
October, 1937.

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*Stories behind the World's  
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## I

*Some Ancient History*

VEN the common scale has a story behind it. The word comes from the Latin and Italian *scala*, and means a staircase. There are many steps in the gradual discovery of this musical staircase by human beings.

About the year 530 b.c., a Greek philosopher named Pythagoras was making some experiments with musical sounds, created by regular vibrations. He had a very good ear, and he was also a very good man, so it was believed by some people that he could actually hear the "music of the spheres," a series of harmonizing tones supposedly given out by the whirling planets.

Pythagoras made his experiments with a "monochord," that is, a string stretched over a piece of wood. He found that when he held down or "stopped" the string at a point exactly halfway between its two ends, and then twanged it, each half vibrated twice as fast as

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the entire string, and gave out a tone which sounded exactly like the original tone, but on a higher level of pitch. He had discovered the interval now known as the octave, and the discovery was one of the most important in the whole history of music.

Just why two tones an octave apart sound so similar is still a bit of a mystery, although scientists have given learned explanations. The important thing is that to any human ear that interval represents the closest consonance that two tones can have, outside of actual "unison," or agreement of pitch. The moment Pythagoras discovered the octave, the problem was merely to fill in the possible spaces between the upper and lower tones showing this curious relationship.

Today almost anyone can do it by ear, but it took over two thousand years for the world to arrive at a real consensus of opinion concerning the scale, and there are still plenty of possible arguments. After the octave, the next interval to be discovered was the fourth, and Greek music was for a long time built on a system of tetrachords, so called because it was assumed that there could be no more than two tones between the upper and lower notes of an interval, making a total of four. For this interval of the fourth, the monochord of Pythagoras would be stopped at a point representing a ratio of 3:4, as compared with the 1:2 of the octave. Later the interval of the fifth was added, with a ratio of 2:3 in its vibrations. (The Greeks called the octave *diapason*, the fourth *diatessaron*, and the fifth *diapente*, but only the

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first of these names is used nowadays, and most people don't know what it means.)

It is astonishing how long music managed to exist with no more of a scale than the fourth, fifth, and octave. The Greeks considered the third and the sixth discords, and nobody even thought of such a possibility as a seventh interval.

But gradually the spaces were filled up, for melodic if not harmonic purposes, and about 310 B.C. a pupil of Aristotle's named Aristoxenus worked out a system of seven octaves. (The word "system" actually corresponds to the Greek word for the scale itself.)

The seven octaves of Aristoxenus were improved by Ptolemy in the middle of the second century A.D., and he gave them the names *Mixolydian*, *Lydian*, *Phrygian*, *Dorian*, *Hypolydian*, *Hypophrygian*, and *Hypodorian*. You can find these octaves (or modes, as they were by this time called) by simply striking seven notes in a row on the white keys of the piano, starting at any point. Each progression will sound different, depending on where you start, and the only one that sounds natural and right to modern ears is the one starting on C.

The addition of a lower note (*Proslambanomenos*) and an extra mode (*Hypermixolydian*) completed the system that became the basis of all the early church music. Ambrose, Bishop of Milan, who lived from A.D. 340 to 397, established the Dorian, Phrygian, Lydian, and Mixolydian as the four "authentic" modes, these corresponding to white-key scales starting on D, E, F, and

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G respectively. Later Pope Gregory (A.D. 540-604) added four "plagal" modes, starting on the notes that are now known as A, B, C, and D.

Gregory's eight modes or scales were the foundation of the Gregorian Chant, which adhered to rigid rules, but without harmony or measured time. It was the monk Hucbald of Flanders (A.D. 840-930) who made the first experiments in those directions. The Greeks had sung only in unison, but unconsciously arrived at the perfect harmony of the octave by having men and women sing together. (A woman's voice, singing the same tones as a man's, is actually an octave higher.) Hucbald invented a type of harmonizing which he called *organum*, merely letting two voices sing the same melody four or five tones apart. To find out how it sounded, just play a tune like *America* starting on F with the right hand and on C with the left, keeping it going in both hands simultaneously. No modern barbershop quartet would stand for it, and unquestionably the later restrictions against "consecutive fourths and fifths" (now ignored by all composers) were due to the horrors of Hucbald's *organum*.

Meanwhile the Christian Church had been getting more and more of a strangle-hold on music, insisting that only the monks had brains enough to write or perform it, and surrounding it with a mass of rules that are totally incomprehensible to the layman, and even to many students of the art. Ironically enough, there were "natural musicians" all over the world, just as there are today, and these instinctive minstrels and creators of

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folk-song were arriving at exactly the same results, without benefit of clergy or the scholastic atmosphere of the monasteries. This conflict between labored and natural music is eternal, and has always resulted eventually in the borrowing of "natural" melodies by the scholars. It is also significant that the Church, which originally tried to preserve a monopoly on music and keep it away from the rest of the world, now leans heavily upon it as a drawing-card, because of its widespread popularity.

### GUIDO'S CONTRIBUTIONS

Credit goes to Guido of Arezzo, another monk, (A.D. 995-1050), for the invention of notation and the determination of the scale as we know it today. He also created the sol-fa system of reading music by syllables. This came about through a Latin hymn to St. John the Baptist, each line of which started on a different step of the scale. The Latin words were as follows:

*Ut queant laxis  
Resonare fibris  
Mira gestorum  
Famuli tuorum  
Solve polluti  
Labii reatum  
Sancte Johannes.*

A free translation would be: "In order that Thy servants, with loose vocal chords, may sing again and again the wonders of Thy deeds, absolve our polluted

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lips from blame, O Saint John!" The significance of this hymn lies in the opening syllable to each line, which Guido used as a name for the tone of the scale that it represented. *Ut* was later changed to *do*, and for a seventh tone (which did not appear in Guido's original scale) the initials S.I. of the final line provided the symbol *si*, now often changed to *ti*. Guido added an extra tone below *ut*, for which he used the Greek letter *gamma*. Thus *gamma-ut* created the word "gamut," applying to the scale as a whole, and eventually to the whole compass of emotions, etc. Guido also used the letters C, G, and F, on various lines of the musical staff, to indicate pitch, and these letters were later transformed into the clefs of modern music.

In the thirteenth century Franco of Cologne worked out the system of measures and notes of different time values, from the shortest (*brevis*) to the longest (*maxima*), and these names survive in the breves, minims, etc., of English notation. (In America the preference is for a system of whole, half, quarter, eighth, and sixteenth notes, figured according to fractions.)

Among the earliest Latin hymns is *Veni Creator Spiritus*, of which many stories are told. It has been considered an Ambrosian chant of the fourth century, but there are those who attribute its composition to Charlemagne. This theory rests on the fact that Charlemagne's grandson, Charles the Bold, sent the hymn as his own in return for a composition by Notker, *Sancti Spiritus adsit nobis gratia*, supposedly inspired by the sound of a mill

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wheel. It has been well established that the troops of Joan of Arc sang *Veni Creator Spiritus* before every battle, just as *Tipperary* and *The Long, Long Trail* were sung in the World War.<sup>1</sup>

Another old Latin hymn famous in history is the *Dies Irae*, written by St. Thomas of Celano early in the thirteenth century. Its words tell of the day of wrath as prophesied by Zephaniah, and it has always been used as a hymn for the dead, being substituted in the Requiem Mass for the *Gloria* and the *Credo*. (Its author was the close friend and biographer of St. Francis of Assisi.) The words were later set to music by Mozart, Cherubini, Berlioz, Verdi, and others, and the original hymn figured prominently in the French Revolution.

An early *Te Deum*, attributed to St. Ambrose, and now known as the "Roman version," is still widely sung, and its melody was used by Palestrina and other composers. The words have naturally enjoyed a great variety of settings, of which Handel's are perhaps the most important. One of the earliest versions of the *Ave Maria* still in use goes back to the Gregorian music of the tenth century. There is also a *Kyrie Eleison* of this period, utilized by Frescobaldi, Bach, and others.

One of the most famous compositions of all time is the English song, *Sumer is icumen in*. It is the oldest piece of harmonized music still sung today, the oldest known example of a canon (round) and of a ground bass, the oldest six-part composition in existence, one of the

<sup>1</sup> Gustav Mahler used this old hymn in his eighth symphony.

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oldest examples of the major mode in music (most of the Gregorian and Ambrosian chants had the effect of minor), and the oldest known manuscript having both sacred and secular words. This remarkable specimen, of which the original is in the British Museum, is usually dated about 1240, although it might have been as early as 1227. The English words are in the Wessex dialect, and it seems to have been written down by John of Fornsete at Reading Abbey. The original composer may have been Wulfstan of Winchester. A Latin text (*Perspice Christicola*) was added for performance at Reading. Technically, *Sumer is icumen in* is an infinite canon or round, for four voices, all starting on the same level of pitch, with two extra parts, also in canon form, acting as ground basses. The importance of the piece lies not only in its indication of the antiquity of polyphonic music in England, but in its evidence that the churchmen could produce something more than the routine and rather dreary progression of ecclesiastical chants.

"No physical conclusion is of musical value which the ear does not endorse," said Guido d'Arezzo. While the Church was proceeding laboriously to build up a technique and a science of music, the art was developing naturally and spontaneously in all the other walks of life, from simple rhythms required for the easing of manual labor, through easily remembered melodies, to the unconscious beauty of popular and national expression which the scholars were eventually forced to recognize.

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Ancient music of the civilized type seems to have originated in Assyria and Egypt and to have spread gradually over the rest of the world. But there is evidence that even the most savage tribes had some sort of music, if nothing more than the rhythm of drums.

By the time of the Middle Ages, the spirit of minstrelsy had spread throughout Europe in various forms. The bards of the northern countries go back to very ancient times (the Grecian Homer was of the same type), and these were ultimately distinguished from the minstrels, who not only sang and composed words and music, but did tricks and took part in plays as well. In France musical knights or gentlemen were called troubadours or *trouvères*, as distinguished from the *jongleurs* or jugglers and the *menestrels*. In Italy a troubadour was known as *trovatore*, as in Verdi's opera. The German *Minnesinger* ("singer of love-songs") was of the same type.

### SOME FAMOUS TROUBADOURS

Richard Coeur de Lion was a troubadour, and so was his friend, Blondel, who found him in prison through singing a song that was familiar to them both. But musically the most significant man of this type was Adam de la Halle, known as "the Hunchback of Arras," who went to Naples to help the Duke of Anjou in avenging the "Sicilian Vespers" (also turned into an opera by Verdi; see page 202). There he composed what may be considered the earliest opera, *Robin and Marion*, a pastoral

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drama with music. It contained one of the most popular of old French tunes, *L'Homme armé*, which was actually introduced into the church service and made the basis of some specially written Masses.

The contests of the Minnesingers were held at the Wartburg, in Eisenach (later the birthplace of Bach) and the characters of Wagner's *Tannhäuser*, such as Wolfram von Eschenbach, Walter von der Vogelweide, and Tannhäuser himself, were all real men in history. Gottfried von Strassburg, another Minnesinger, was responsible for the Teutonic version of *Tristan und Isolde*, while Wolfram von Eschenbach put the stories of *Lohengrin* and *Parsifal* into the form used by Wagner. The Mastersingers came later, representing various guilds, and they also held competitions, but more in the spirit of technical rules than of the romantic flights of the Minnesingers. Hans Sachs, the shoemaker of Nuremberg, was the best known *Meistersinger*, later also immortalized by Wagner.<sup>1</sup>

As part-singing developed, everyone became interested in the complexities of harmony, not as it is known to-day, but in the so-called polyphonic or many-voiced style, with each part essentially an independent melodic line. This type of music grew so complicated, particularly in the madrigals of England, Italy, and the Netherlands,

<sup>1</sup> An old German couplet ran:

Hans Sachs was a shoe-  
Maker and a poet too.

## *Some Ancient History*

that instruments were finally needed to play the parts, which had gone beyond the limits of the human voice.

Meanwhile the music of the Church had become corrupted by the growing inclusion of popular melodies and an increasing disregard for the traditions of style. (What modern organist was it that first thought of playing *A Hot Time in the Old Town To-night* as an anthem?) The man who saved the situation and proved for all time how effective ecclesiastical music could be, without loss of dignity or sacrifice of convention, was Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina (the last name being that of his birthplace).

One of the most popular of all musical stories concerns Palestrina, and it is worth telling even though it may be entirely untrue. It is said that the Council of Trent had definitely decided to drop music from the Church because of the abuses that had crept in. Palestrina, who at the time was choirmaster at the church of Santa Maria Maggiore, in Rome, but without experience as a composer, had a vision in which he was told to write a Mass in a certain style and take it to the Pope (Pius IV). The result was the famous *Missa Papae Marcelli* which became a model for such music and resulted in Palestrina's appointment at the Vatican. It is true that the Council of Trent seriously criticized and perhaps thought of abandoning the music of the Church, but the Mass in question seems to have been written earlier than this historic meeting. Actually Palestrina had been working for years to arrive at the perfection of style which marks

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his finest work. He remains the greatest figure in ecclesiastical music before the time of Bach.

It was Bach who, in his *Well-tempered Clavichord*, put the final touches on the scale, showing how it could be adapted to the convenience of human ears and how it is the logical basis of all civilized music; and it is Bach who is the logical leader in a great procession of master composers, each offering a wide variety of stories behind the music that he created.

## II

### *The Private Life of J. S. Bach*



UR organist—what is the young man's name?—oh, yes, Johann Sebastian Bach! He seems badly in need of discipline. We gave him a month's leave of absence that he might hear the great Dietrich Buxtehude in Lübeck. It is now three months since he left, and we hear nothing of him."

These ominous words are spoken by one of the deacons of the New Church in Arnstadt, where Bach has been employed since his eighteenth year.

"Remember he has to walk over two hundred miles each way. That takes time," suggests a milder pillar of the church.

"Not three months," insists the first speaker. "Besides the lad is strong and has had good practice in walking."

There is considerable discussion of what should be done to this independent young musician, who three years ago had won the post of organist and choirmaster

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by a brilliant display of musicianship which left them all gasping for breath. It is decided that there must be at the very least a "citation," meaning a formal complaint, demanding explanation of his conduct, with hints of possible dismissal.

Various items appear in the citation, as more and more of Bach's indiscretions are revealed. He is charged with having played "unseemly variations" on the organ during chorales, "throwing the congregation off." There is objection also to the "great length and unseemly figuration" of his preludes, "intermixing many strange sounds so that thereby the congregation were confounded."

Someone stops to ask, "Who is the strange maiden who now regularly appears to make music in the choir?" and the question is duly entered in the citation. (They found out when Bach married her a year later that she was his cousin, Maria Barbara, an excellent singer, who bore him seven children before she died in 1720.)

This Johann Sebastian Bach seems to have been a very determined person, even in his youngest days. There is a story that as a boy he copied an entire volume of music by moonlight, a task requiring six months, only to have his manuscript confiscated by the cruel brother who had refused to lend him the original. He had walked repeatedly from his school at Lüneburg to Hamburg, a distance of twenty-five miles each way, merely to hear some good music.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> On one of these expeditions the boy was sitting by the roadside tired, hungry, and penniless. Someone threw him a couple of fish heads from a window, and each head proved to have a ducat concealed in it.

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Bach's desire to hear Buxtehude was a natural one. This Danish musician had made an international reputation, not only by his organ playing, but by the series of concerts known as *Abendmusiken*, given on five Sundays each year, with an orchestra and singers in addition to the organ in the Marienkirche. Buxtehude is practically forgotten today, but one of his themes lives in the great Bach *Passacaglia* which has been orchestrated for modern audiences.

### **BACH CHANGES JOBS**

The Arnstadt citation convinced young Bach that he should look for work elsewhere, and he had no difficulty in winning a competition for the post of organist at St. Blasius Church in Mühlhausen. The salary was less than at Arnstadt, but to its 85 gulden were added twelve bushels of corn, two cords of wood, six trusses of brushwood, and three pounds of fish, with the loan of a cart to transport his belongings.

Unfortunately the St. Blasius organ was not very good, and Bach spent much of his time having it repaired. But his reputation was now so great that he was able to do his own choosing. He accepted the position of court organist at Weimar and remained there for nearly ten years, studying, playing, and composing with tireless industry.

That is really the story of Bach's whole life. Music was his job, and he worked at it constantly. Sometimes the work was pleasant, and sometimes not, but he never shirked and he seldom complained.

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One of his youthful compositions, of a more recreational character, is the *Capriccio on the Departure of a Beloved Brother*, an early example of program music, bringing in the postilion's horn and other dramatic touches. This was not the cruel brother, Johann Christoph, with whom he had spent his boyhood, but the charming Johann Jacob, who in 1704 entered the Swedish Guard as an oboe player. (There is no indication that the cruel brother played the piccolo.)<sup>1</sup>

During the stay at Weimar, the composer had a chance to make tours to other cities, playing and giving expert advice on organs, and occasionally taking part in contests which added to his renown. (The French organist, Marchand, failed to appear in Dresden, after accepting a challenge, evidently having heard a sample of Bach's work.)

The next step was the musical directorship at Cöthen, by appointment of Prince Leopold, and here Bach had the opportunity to experiment with instrumentation, composing orchestral works and chamber music. It was at Cöthen that Bach wrote his great *Brandenburg Concertos*,<sup>2</sup> the *French* and *English Suites*, and the first part of the *Well-tempered Clavichord*, which firmly established the modern tempered scale, illustrating the

<sup>1</sup> There is a record of no less than fifty-nine male members of the Bach family, mostly musical, including twelve sons of Johann Sebastian himself. Forty-seven of the fifty-nine had names beginning with Johann.

<sup>2</sup> Dedicated to Christian Ludwig, Margrave of Brandenburg, whom Bach met at Carlsbad.

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possibilities of all the keys in forty-eight *Preludes* and *Fugues*. Here also he created those popular *Inventions*, for his own children, unaware that they would continue to be played by both children and adults for centuries to come.

Cöthen gave Bach his second wife, Anna Magdalena Wülken, a soprano, daughter of the court trumpeter at Weissenfels. She became the mother of thirteen more little Bachs, making a total of twenty altogether. Bach was very fond of her, as is indicated by the inscription on a *Noten-Büchlein vor Anna Magdalena Bach*, which he presented to her. The collection, incidentally, contains a song about the reflections of a smoker.

Without actually giving up his Cöthen position, Bach entered upon the final and most productive period of his life, in Leipzig, where he became cantor in the Thomas Schule and director of music in the two leading churches (St. Thomas and St. Nicholas). The rest of his career was largely a matter of routine, although it resulted in some of the greatest music ever written. For each Sunday service he would compose a cantata, just as the minister would write a sermon, and most of these have been preserved. Occasionally he branched out into larger works, such as the *Passion according to St. Matthew*, or the immortal *Mass in B minor*.

The dedication of this tremendous composition to the Elector of Saxony, is an index to the real humility of the man, and also to his troubles with the town council, which could never quite understand him and handicapped

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him in a variety of petty ways. One resents this abject tone from such a genius:

ILLUSTRIOS ELECTOR, GRACIOUS MASTER:

To Your Royal Highness I offer in deepest devotion this small fruit of the knowledge to which I have attained in music, with the most humble prayer that you will look upon it, not according to the poor composition, but with your world-renowned clemency, and therefore will take me under your powerful protection.

I have for some years had the direction of the music in the two chief churches at Leipzig, but have suffered several disagreeable things, and my income has been reduced, though I am myself blameless, but these troubles would be easily overcome if Your Highness would grant me the favor of a decree, after conferring with your court orchestra.

The gracious granting of my prayer would bind me everlastingly to honor you, and I offer myself to do anything with obedience that Your Royal Highness may require of me in the way of composing church or orchestral music, and to give unwearied industry, and to dedicate my whole strength to your service.

With ever-increasing faithfulness, I remain Your Royal Highness' most obedient servant,

JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH

The *Mass in B minor* is not really church music, although it follows the Roman outline. Bach was a good Lutheran, but his dramatic sense told him what might be effective in concert performance, and he did not resent using the materials of the Roman Catholic liturgy for his own ends. The *Credo* of this great *Mass* contains the theme of a Gregorian chant. In other sections Bach borrowed freely from the cantatas that he had already written.

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In the *St. Matthew Passion*, written for a Good Friday service in Leipzig, Bach made striking use of the chorale, *O Haupt voll Blut und Wunden* (O sacred Head now wounded), which occurs five times in the course of the work. This seems to have been his favorite of all the Lutheran hymn tunes that came out of the old German folk-music, for he used it again in his *Christmas Oratorio*, with the words *Wie soll ich dich empfangen?* (How shall I then receive Thee?), a regular Advent hymn, to which he evidently wished to give a touch of Lenten prophecy. It also appears in four of Bach's cantatas and in his *Choralgesänge*.

This wonderful melody fully deserved such attention. It was known first in 1601, as a secular love-song by Hans Leo Hassler, *Mein G'müt ist mir verwirret von einer Jungfrau zart* (My spirit is distracted all through a maiden fair). Neither Martin Luther nor Johann Sebastian Bach was inclined to overlook good music merely because its sentiments might not be entirely religious. In 1613 Christoph Knoll had already made a hymn out of the love-song, beginning "*Herzlich thut mich verlangen nach einem seel'gen End'*" ("My longing is most hearty toward a blessed end"). In 1620 a poet named Schneegass changed the words to "*Ach Herr, wir armen Sünder*" ("O Lord, all we poor sinners"), and in 1656, still nearly thirty years before Bach's birth, Paul Gerhardt established the song as a Lenten chorale, with the words that now appear in the Lutheran hymn-books and in the *St. Matthew Passion*.

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But most of Bach's music is not so easily traced. His themes were generally original, and his industry was practically inexhaustible. Wherever he lived, he seemed possessed of three leading thoughts: to make an honest living out of music, to praise God and carry out his daily routine in a spirit of piety, and to reproduce the Bach family as befitted the name.

Much of his work has been lost, and it is obvious that he never thought of it as in any sense immortal. Always he composed according to his environment. When he was primarily an organist, in his early days, he wrote chiefly organ music, some of which is heard today in the form of piano arrangements. When he had good instrumentalists at his disposal, he concentrated on instrumental suites, sonatas, and concertos.

### CHORAL HANDICAPS

The choruses that he had in Leipzig were never very large or very good, probably not more than four voices to a part, and with this limited equipment he managed to produce the *Passions*, the *Mass*, and other great choral music, with scarcely a hint of how they might actually sound. Bach's duties as a choirmaster could not have been very pleasant, for his standards were too high for him to exercise much patience with a lot of undisciplined boys. As a teacher he was continually criticized, and he evidently hated to spend much time or effort with mediocre talents. Yet he trained his own sons wonderfully well, and with the greatest affection, with the result that

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three of them, Wilhelm Friedemann, Johann Christian and Karl Philipp Emanuel, became distinguished musicians in turn. A *Clavier-Büchlein vor Wilhelm Friedemann Bach*, begun at Cöthen in 1720, contains most of the *Inventions* and several of the *Preludes* later used in the *Well-tempered Clavichord*.

The best known of these *Preludes* today is unquestionably the very first, in C major, and unfortunately its familiarity is due chiefly to the *Ave Maria* melody which Gounod superimposed upon it, over a century later.

Equally well known is the melody generally called *Air on the G String*, and now played mostly by violinists and occasionally by the string section of a symphony orchestra. It was originally in D, appearing in the orchestral suite in that key. August Wilhelmj transposed it to the key of C, which makes it possible to play it entirely on the G string of a violin.

A popular *Bourrée* in G, also heard as a rule on the violin, originally appeared in Bach's third suite for violoncello. Another *Bourrée*, in G minor, from the second violin sonata, is popular today on the piano as well as its original instrument. The *Gavotte in E major (Rondo)*, from the sixth violin sonata, has also survived in various forms.

One of Bach's most familiar vocal pieces is the air *My Heart Ever Faithful* from his *Cantata* for Pentecost. Gluck's famous melody representing the Elysian Fields may have been influenced by its serene progressions. Another melodic interpretation of spiritual calm is the

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*Arioso* which formed the introduction or "Sinfonia" to the one hundred and fifty-sixth cantata, originally an oboe solo.

Concert pianists have popularized the chorale *Jesus, Joy of Man's Desiring*, by Johann Schop, which appears in the one hundred and forty-seventh cantata ("Heart, Mind, Deed and Life"), and, with its decorations in triplets, represents one of Bach's finest arrangements of such music, thoroughly modern in spirit.

There is a premonition of modern harmony also in the great *Chromatic Fantasia and Fugue*, which has been given four significant concert arrangements, by Hans von Bülow, Emil Sauer, Ferruccio Busoni, and Eugene d'Albert.

The familiar *Chaconne*, for unaccompanied violin, is the fifth movement of the fourth sonata, and it also has been well arranged for the piano, as well as for full orchestra.

Bach's *Fugues* were written for the organ, the harpsichord, or the clavichord, according to his own convenience. The *Prelude, Fugue and Allegro*, in E-flat, was originally marked "for Lute or Cembal (Harpsichord)."<sup>1</sup>

A well-known *Fugue*, in B minor, has a subject by Tommaso Albinoni, a Venetian composer whom Bach admired greatly. The same composer supplied Bach with still another fugal subject, and he often used his bass parts as exercises for his pupils in thorough-bass.

<sup>1</sup> He invented an instrument combining the best features of both.

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These are mere hints as to the facts behind some of Bach's great music. In most cases the notes have to speak for themselves, and they are fully equal to the task. For one who is often called the greatest composer of all time, Johann Sebastian Bach's life was thoroughly private.

### ROYALTY MEETS ROYALTY

There is an authentic story, however, in his visit to King Frederick the Great at Potsdam, where his son, Karl Philipp Emanuel, was already employed as cembalist. "Old Fritz" has gone down in history as a music lover and at least an adequate flute player, and he received the composer with the greatest enthusiasm, stopping his court activity with the announcement, "Old Bach is here." (This was in 1747, when Bach was actually sixty-two years old.)

The master played on all the Silbermann pianos and organs at the palace, and excited the admiration of all by his improvisations, one of which was on a theme given him by the King. On his return to Leipzig, Bach worked out this theme into a complete composition, which he called *Musikalisches Opfer* (*Musical Offering*) and sent to Frederick with a dedication that again illustrates his consistent and lifelong humility:

Most GRACIOUS KING,

To Your Majesty is proffered herewith in humblest obedience a musical offering, whose most excellent portion originates from your noble hand. I recall with respectful pleasure the peculiarly royal favor with which during my visit to Potsdam Your Majesty was pleased to play

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to me a fugue theme, and to require me immediately to work it out in your presence. Obedience to Your Majesty's command was my duty. I, however, soon remarked that for want of proper preparation the working out was not as good as so excellent a theme required. I therefore resolved to work out this most royal theme properly, and to make it known to the world. This project is now fulfilled to the best of my ability, and it has no other object than in some small way to do honor to the fame of a monarch, whose greatness and power, both in the arts of peace and in those of war, and especially in that of music, are acknowledged and admired by all. I make bold to add this humble request: that Your Majesty will accord a gracious reception to this small work, and by so doing still further extend your royal condescension.

Your Majesty's most humble and obedient servant,

THE AUTHOR

Evidently Bach could be a tactful person when he chose. (As may be supposed, the "working out" in this *Musical Offering* is far superior to the theme.) The famous *Goldberg Variations* were written for his favorite pupil, Johann Gottlieb Goldberg, at the request of Count Kaiserling, who insisted that they be played to him every night, to put him to sleep (perhaps a doubtful compliment) and rewarded the composer with a golden goblet and 100 louis d'or.

But on the whole Bach's later years were not happy, except in his family life. He did not get along well with the Rector, Ernesti, at St. Thomas', and their continuous quarreling led to a traditional feud between rector and cantor that lasted for years after their time. He was constantly reminded "not to make church music too long or too operatic," and in general the town council of

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Leipzig showed little appreciation of what he accomplished.

When his eyesight began to fail, in 1749, they thought seriously of dismissing him, although his blindness was the result of his constant labors in their service and in the perfecting of his art. An unsuccessful operation was performed on Bach's eyes by an English physician, Dr. Taylor, who, a few years later, operated on Handel, also unsuccessfully.

Johann Sebastian Bach died of apoplexy on July 28, 1750, and for nearly a century his works were practically forgotten, until Mendelssohn called attention to them and made the world realize what a stupendous genius it had been ignoring. Bach's widow eventually died in an almshouse and was buried in a pauper's grave. Bach's own grave, originally in the churchyard of St. John's, was obliterated when a new road was cut through, and it was not until the end of the nineteenth century that his remains were found and given a proper burial in a special crypt of the church.

The story of Bach's music is not particularly exciting, and certainly not in any sense gratifying. It merely goes to prove that even the greatest gifts, combined with the greatest industry, cannot guarantee the type of public appreciation which later composers considered essential to their well-being.

### III

## *Battling Handel and His Victories*



N a bright December day of the year 1704, a duel is being fought in the Hamburg market place. One of the combatants is the versatile critic, author, linguist, composer, and all-around musician, Johann Mattheson. The other, a mere boy of nineteen, plays second fiddle in the opera-house orchestra, and his name is George F. Handel.<sup>1</sup>

It is a good fight while it lasts, for both young men are excellent swordsmen, and there is evidently a real grudge between them. Suddenly Mattheson sees an opening and lunges forward. His sword strikes a large metal button on Handel's coat and snaps off short. As they stand facing each other, the youngster's life saved by a miracle, the older man now at his mercy, Handel drops

<sup>1</sup> The name of Handel is frequently spelled Haendel, the *æ* representing the German umlaut, which it originally possessed. But for the greater part of his life Handel himself used the English spelling, Anglicizing also his first name, and writing the middle name as "Friderick."

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his sword. Simultaneously they burst into tears, embrace, and are friends again.

This friendship had been of an unusual type, and its disruption suggested comedy as well as tragedy. Young Handel had come to Hamburg from his native Halle a year earlier, to make his fortune as a musician, and Mattheson, confident of his judgment and assured in his own high position, had taken him up immediately, introduced him at the opera, and given his career a practical start.

They had shared the task of teaching the son of the English ambassador. They had traveled to Lübeck together to hear the famous organist, Dietrich Buxtehude,<sup>1</sup> and either one of them might have been his successor, except that it meant marrying Buxtehude's daughter, which seemed too great a sacrifice.

There had been a rift in the friendship when, during Mattheson's absence in Holland, Handel suddenly turned from opera to sacred music (a portent for the future) and composed a successful *Passion according to St. John*. Mattheson criticized the music severely and humiliated his protégé in other ways. George had his revenge when Mattheson's opera, *Cleopatra*, was performed. In this the composer also played the part of Anthony, and, while off the stage, conducted the orchestra from the clavecin, in full costume. Handel insisted that after Anthony had been killed, he should not appear again as conductor,

<sup>1</sup> They were just a year ahead of another aspiring young musician, Johann Sebastian Bach, who, however, made his two-hundred-mile journey on foot.

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knowing perfectly well that Mattheson wanted to make sure of his bows at the finish.

They argued the matter for two performances, and at the third Handel calmly took his place at the clavecin (for which he was the understudy) and refused to give it up to the revived Anthony. The immediate result was an old-fashioned fist fight, in full view of the audience, and, when this was declared a draw, the duel followed automatically.

This was by no means the last fight in Handel's life, but it came the nearest to a fatal ending. He was by nature a stubborn and belligerent person, heavily built and of rather grim visage, although he could smile charmingly when pleased. The world gave him his full share of battles, and the result was a wealth of good music.

Handel soon excited the jealousy of Reinhard Keiser, then director of the Hamburg Opera, by writing two dramatic works, *Almira* and *Nero*, which were successfully performed. But Keiser had to leave town because of his unpaid bills, and the Hamburg Opera speedily went to pieces.

During all the time that Keiser and other musicians had been living wildly and extravagantly in Hamburg, young Handel had led a frugal existence, saving his money and working hard at his music. Even in his boyhood days in Halle he had made a real reputation as an organist and a virtuoso on the clavichord, and there were stories of how he had taught himself as a child, playing in the attic at night, against his father's wishes,

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and finally forcing recognition of his extraordinary gifts. But now he wanted to write operas, and since Italy was the land of opera, he decided to go there.

Hamburg has been called "the Venice of Germany," but Venice itself was then a musical center beyond a composer's wildest dreams. It had no less than seven opera-houses, all running full blast, with additional orchestras, choirs, and individual stars enough to turn its life into a perpetual concert.

### CARNIVAL IN VENICE

There is a neat and possibly true story about Handel's introduction to Venice. Soon after his arrival he attended a masquerade, incognito, and during the evening began to play upon the clavier.<sup>1</sup> Domenico Scarlatti, reputedly the world's greatest clavier player, happened to be present, listened for a few minutes, and then exclaimed, "It is either the Saxon or the devil."

They became good friends, and shortly staged a public contest on the clavier and organ. Their clavier playing was called a tie, but as an organist Scarlatti himself declared Handel an easy winner. Thereafter the Italian always crossed himself when mentioning Handel's name.

The young composer made new friends in Rome as well as Venice, and his departure from the Eternal City in-

<sup>1</sup> The words clavier, clavecin, and clavichord are all applied loosely to the same type of instrument, differing from the harpsichord in using hammers or tangents to strike the strings instead of plucking them with quills. The German word *Klavier*, originally used of the harpsichord, now refers to the modern pianoforte.

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spired him to write the beautiful *Partenza*, an Italian cantata expressive of real grief. In Naples he picked up a variety of Italian folk-songs, and also some of the rustic melodies of the Calabrian Pifferari (pipers), one of which appeared many years later in the *Pastoral Symphony* of his *Messiah*.

Handel's real battles, however, were fought mostly in London, where he first arrived at the age of twenty-five, after having succeeded the Italian, Steffani, at his own suggestion, as *Kapellmeister* in Hanover. That city already had its eyes on the English crown, and for several years Handel wavered in his allegiance between George of Hanover and the Elector's cousin, Queen Anne of England.

He made an immediate London success with his opera *Rinaldo*, composed in fourteen days (using actual singing birds on the stage), and then made sure of the royal favor by writing a *Birthday Ode* to the Queen. Suddenly Queen Anne died, and Handel's Hanoverian employer became King George I of England.

It was a ticklish position for the composer, but he worked his way out of it in characteristic fashion. The story is that the new monarch capitulated when Handel surprised him with his *Water Music*, played from a barge on the Thames during a state aquatic pageant. Actually he seems to have won the King's favor first by his charming opera *Amadigi*; but the *Water Music* unquestionably helped in overcoming any possible misunderstandings.

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It is hard to be angry with a man who keeps on turning out good tunes.

George I was really fond of music, and he took Handel along when he went back to Hanover in 1715, maintaining his position as *Kapellmeister*, and also employing him as music teacher for the little princesses. On his return to England, Handel accepted the post of chapelmaster to the Duke of Chandos, who had a magnificent estate named Cannons, where he allowed the composer plenty of leisure for creative work. The musical fruits of this pleasant interlude, during which Handel had a fine orchestra and singers at his disposal, included the two *Chandos Te Deums*, twelve *Chandos Anthems*, the "serenata," *Acis and Galatea*, and his first English oratorio, *Esther*.

### **THE OPERATIC COMPLEX**

Unfortunately Handel now decided to take charge of Italian opera for the Royal Academy of Music. As everyone knows today, if you are looking for trouble there is nothing like being an operatic impresario. That form of art seems to be unique in bringing out the meanest traits of human nature. So the proud and stubborn Handel entered upon the worst series of misfortunes in his entire career.

First a rival faction imported two well-known composers from Italy, Bononcini and Ariosti, of whom the first was important enough to divide London society

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into two warring camps. A verse often attributed to Dean Swift, but actually written by a Lancashire poet, John Byrom, sums up the situation concisely:

Some say, compared to Bononcini,  
That Mynheer Handel's but a Ninny;  
Others aver, that he to Handel  
Is scarcely fit to hold a Candle;  
Strange all this Difference should be,  
'Twixt Tweedle-dum and Tweedle-dee!

In those days they looked on music as a form of athletic competition (but distinctly not cricket), and the public was constantly clamoring for a contest of some sort. This time it took the form of an opera, *Muzio Scevola*, with each of its three acts written by a different composer. Ariosti was outclassed, but the comparative merits of Handel and Bononcini remained undecided.

There was rivalry also among the artists engaged by Handel, led by the temperamental Francesca Cuzzoni. (Handel once threatened to throw her out of the window, at a rehearsal.) Her great competitor as a trick singer was Faustina Bordoni, also full of temperament.

To give them a chance for public competition, Handel wrote the opera *Alessandro*, in which they had equally important parts as actual rivals. The ladies took this literally and on one occasion staged a real brawl with scratching and hair-pulling. There were yells from the audience, pamphlets and handbills, and all the other appurtenances of operatic war.

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But what finally defeated Handel was the soft voice of satire. Dr. Pepusch, his predecessor at Cannons, collaborated with John Gay to take effective revenge in *The Beggar's Opera*, which at one stroke revealed the absurdities of the whole Italian school and at the same time won honest favor by its popular tunes and its witty, often ribald, English dialogue. Pepusch even parodied the *Crusaders' March* from *Rinaldo* in a vulgar tavern scene.

Handel, however, now a naturalized English citizen, stuck to his guns, and eventually had the satisfaction of seeing Bononcini thrown out of England when he was caught stealing a madrigal from Antonio Lotti, presenting it to the Academy of Ancient Music as his own.

There is irony in this victory by default, for no composer ever lived who borrowed more music from others than George F. Handel himself. His argument was "They don't know what to do with these tunes, and I do." So he calmly appropriated whatever he felt he needed.

For example, the overture to *Samson* has in its *Minuet* a tune from Keiser's *Claudius*. Handel used the same composer's air, *Wallet nicht zu laut*, in *Acis and Galatea* and elsewhere. Lully and Steffani definitely influenced the early Handel operas, thematically as well as in style. Melodies by his first teacher, Zachau, appear in *Acis and Galatea*, *Hercules*, *The Messiah*, and *Joshua*.

The chorus, *Wretched Lovers*, in *Acis and Galatea*, starts with a theme from a fugue by Bach, and its second part

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had already been used by Handel in his *Chamber Duets*, which also supplied him with four choruses in *The Messiah*. One of these duets was taken directly from Steffani. A canon by Turini supplied the subject for Handel's *Clavier-fugue in B-flat*, later used also in his second concerto for the hautbois (oboe). Leo, Carissimi, Pergolesi, Graun, Muffat, Caldara, and other composers all contributed to the melodic stock of Handel.

A *Te Deum* by Francesco Antonio Uria supplied him with the greater part of nine movements of the *Dettingen Te Deum* and six parts of the oratorio *Saul*. A curious *Serenade* by Alessandro Stradella also proved a treasure of melody, appearing in several Handelian works, but chiefly in *Israel in Egypt*, one passage consisting of twenty-seven measures, transferred note for note. The same oratorio contains an *Organ Canzona* by John Caspar Kerl, disguised as the chorus *Egypt Was Glad*.

The only possible excuse for these "borrowings" is that in Handel's time the emphasis on musical workmanship was far greater than on melodic invention. Many tunes were considered common property, and there was a certain compliment in using the work of one's teacher, or any older composer, so long as it was properly treated and acknowledged. Perhaps Handel merely forgot the acknowledgments.

There is a *Magnificat* in the Royal Library at Buckingham Palace, in Handel's handwriting, which also exists, badly written in another hand, attributed to a certain Erba, who may have been Dionigi Erba, of Milan, an

## *George Frederick Handel*

obscure composer. The question of authorship is a nice one, because Handel used half a dozen movements of this *Magnificat* in the second part of *Israel in Egypt*, while the chorus, *Sicut locutus est*, appears in *Susannah* as *Yet His Bolt*.

Nobody seems to have noticed the similarity of Handel's famous *Largo* to the slow movement of Bach's *Double Concerto* for two violins.<sup>1</sup> What is most interesting about that great melody, however, is that it was written as a tenor aria in Handel's opera, *Serse (Xerxes)* with the title *Ombra mai fu*, representing the comments of Xerxes upon the soothing presence of a plane-tree, a remarkably calm episode in a work written at a time when things were blackest in the composer's life.

### THE HARMONIOUS BLACKSMITH

Perhaps the most discussed of all of Handel's compositions is the air and set of variations universally known as *The Harmonious Blacksmith*. Again there is some question as to Handel's melodic authorship, although the variations are certainly his. Weckerlin was at one time wrongly quoted as having placed the air in an old collection of French *Chansons*, with words by Clément Marot. Then a Viennese clavecin player, G. C. Wagenseil,

<sup>1</sup> Bach and Handel were born in the same year, 1685, shared also by Domenico Scarlatti, but never met. They were once only four miles apart, and Bach came from Cöthen to see Handel at Halle. But Handel had already left on one of his numerous trips. When Handel's mother died, in 1730, Bach's son, Friedemann, came to Halle and invited Handel to visit the Bach family in Leipzig, but Handel declined.

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was credited with its invention, until someone pointed out that Wagenseil was only five years old when the piece was published by Handel.

The title has also its full share of legends and theories. One story is that there was an actual blacksmith at Edgeware, near the palace of the Duke of Chandos, and that Handel used to hear him singing this tune, beating time to it on his anvil. But it is now proved that Handel himself never called his piece *The Harmonious Blacksmith*. Both the title and the story seem to have been invented by Richard Clark who later brought it out with an actual anvil accompaniment, as he imagined Handel to have heard it. The composer merely gave it the number 5 in a series of *Pieces for the Clavecin*.

The truth seems to be that there was a music-dealer in Bath named Lintern, who had once been a blacksmith. He was constantly asked to play this composition, already known as "Handel's fifth favorite lesson," and finally published it separately, giving it the title by which he himself was known, *The Harmonious Blacksmith*. Incidentally, Beethoven used the same tune for a two-part organ fugue, which was not published until 1888.

Handel had no Tune Detective to bother him in the early eighteenth century. His troubles were far more serious. After writing coronation anthems for George II, he incurred the enmity of the Prince of Wales who was chiefly concerned with being nasty to his father. The prince managed to start another rival opera-house,

## *George Frederick Handel*

bringing on Porpora and Faustina's husband, Johann Hasse, as competitive composers.

Handel was thrown out of the Haymarket Theater, and finally started his own opera company at Covent Garden, then merely a music-hall, devoted to ballets and cheap burlesque shows. He tried his luck with ballet operas in these surroundings, engaging as his star a lady billed as "La Salle." When he was \$50,000 in debt, she left him, and Handel went back to composing operas.

Not until the performance of his *Alexander's Feast*, to Dryden's words, in 1736, was there any real indication of the great oratorios to come. Then Handel was stricken with paralysis, declared himself bankrupt, and closed his theater, with consolation only in the fact that the rival opera-house also closed a week later. He went to the baths at Aix-la-Chapelle and was miraculously cured.

His return to London was celebrated by a general attack of creditors and threats of imprisonment. But a benefit concert, to which he objected strenuously as "merely a form of begging," proved very successful, and he was given the unusual honor of a statue in Vauxhall Gardens. (It was a bad statue, but at least it did not have to eat.)

Handel now seemed at last to realize, after a series of terrible beatings, that the public no longer wanted his operas, possibly not any operas at all. So he composed two successful oratorios in rapid succession, *Saul* (with its famous *Dead March*) and the largely assembled

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*Israel in Egypt.* This gave a new stimulus to his detractors, and they began again to write letters to the papers, pull down advertising placards, and indulge in all the other familiar forms of socially correct sabotage. What hurt most of all was a published letter that seriously made excuses for Handel and suggested starting a fund for him.

He left London in a rage, to be jubilantly received in Dublin by the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, natural admirer of a fighting musician. There, in a little over three weeks, Handel wrote *The Messiah*, and it was given its first performance in Dublin at a charity concert, April 13, 1742.<sup>1</sup>

London was slow to accept even this masterpiece of sacred music. It had three performances there during the year 1743, two more in 1745, and was then dropped altogether for four years. It was at the first London performance that the tradition began of the audience's rising for the *Hallelujah Chorus*. Some say that this was a mere accident, owing to the entrance of the King at that moment. In any case, the listeners did not rise until the words "For the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth," whereas nowadays they stand through the entire chorus.

There was pious opposition to *The Messiah*, similar to that which greeted *The Green Pastures* in modern times. Handel's title was not permitted on posters, and it was long called merely "A Sacred Oratorio." The cabal was

<sup>1</sup> The text was prepared by Charles Jennens, also responsible for adding *Il Moderato* to Milton's *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso*.

## *George Frederick Handel*

still getting in its work, keeping audiences away as much as possible, but battling Handel kept on, writing his *Samson* in five weeks, and following it with the *Dettingen Te Deum*, in celebration of the victory of the Duke of Cumberland over the French at Dettingen, June 27, 1743.

It was the fear of a common enemy that finally gave Handel a secure place in the hearts of Englishmen. They were honestly worried over the threatened invasion of the Scotch, under Bonnie Prince Charlie, and Handel's *Song Made for the Gentlemen Volunteers of London* had a timely and popular appeal. His *Occasional Oratorio* contained still more patriotic sentiments, in addition to the theme of *Rule, Britannia*, credited later to Dr. Arne.

When the Duke of Cumberland beat the Scotch at Culloden Moor, Handel wrote his *Judas Maccabaeus* in celebration, and suddenly found himself hailed as England's national composer.<sup>1</sup> His debts were cleared up. Prosperity returned.

Visiting his native Halle in 1750, he stepped on German soil again the very day, almost the very moment, that Bach died, July 28. He himself was nearly killed in a carriage accident between La Haye and Amsterdam. It might have been better so, although he had one more composition, the oratorio *Jephtha*, still to come.

It was while writing the chorus, *How Dark, O Lord, are Thy Ways*, that his eyesight suddenly failed him. By the time the work was finished he was totally blind.

<sup>1</sup> This oratorio contains the song *See, the Conquering Hero Comes*.

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Handel accepted this final blow with a humility that was never characteristic of his battles against human agencies. He continued to play the organ in public, but composed nothing more of any importance during the remaining eight years of his life.

On April 6, 1759, Handel took part in his last *Messiah*. He broke down in the middle of a number, but recovered and improvised superbly, as had been his custom for many years. When they took him home, he expressed the wish to die on Good Friday, "in the hope of rejoining the good God, my sweet Lord and Saviour, on the day of His Resurrection." Death actually came to him in the early morning hours of Saturday, April 14, almost as he had desired.

In spite of his financial difficulties, Handel left a fortune of \$125,000, all earned during the last ten years of his life. He was a good judge of pictures, and his collection included two Rembrandts. Musicians do not always die in poverty.

## IV

### *Pluck and Gluck*



If you went to a party in Paris during the late 1770's, you were fairly sure to be greeted by the question, "Are you a Gluckist or a Piccinnist?"

It is amazing that a great city could have been so stirred by an argument concerning two composers of opera. The wordy battle was as violent in its way as those of the Montagues and Capulets, Guelphs and Ghibellines, Whigs and Tories.

The winner, in the eyes of posterity, was Christoph Willibald Gluck, Chevalier of the Order of the Golden Spur, but at the time the result was generally considered a double knockout.<sup>1</sup> Certainly both Gluck and his rival,

<sup>1</sup> Gluck's title of Chevalier or *Ritter* seems to have been given him by Pope Benedict XIV while the composer was in Italy. Mozart received the same title at the age of fifteen, but stopped using it when he found that it created ridicule. The family name was often spelled Kluck (never with the *umlaut* that some people insist on giving it) and its background seems to have been Bohemian.

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the now forgotten Niccola Piccinni, profited little by the absurd combat.

The climax of the Gluck-Piccinni feud (taken, as usual, far more seriously by their respective adherents than by the composers themselves) came in the typical suggestion that they both set the same story to music, and let the best man win. The classic legend of *Iphigenia in Tauris* was selected, but Piccinni got off to a bad start through an impossibly amateurish libretto, which had to be re-written. Gluck thus arrived at a public performance ahead of his rival.

Piccinni was further handicapped when, on the second night of his own opera, it became painfully evident that the prima donna, Mlle. Laguerre, was in a state of intoxication that no Greek maiden could possibly have achieved. Sophie Arnould, the Dorothy Parker of her day, started the *bon mot*, "*C'est Iphigénie en Champagne!*" Nobody seems to have thought of answering, "*C'est Laguerre, mes enfants, c'est Laguerre!*"

Both composers also gave operatic treatment to the subject of *Roland*, but Gluck burned his music after hearing that Piccinni's was to be performed at the Opera, and in this case the Italian scored a real triumph, chiefly because of his pretty ballet tunes. They both gave music lessons to Marie Antoinette (Piccinni's were free of

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Gluck's father and mother were in the household of Prince Lobkowitz, and he himself served the father of that Lobkowitz whom Beethoven later immortalized with the title of "Esel" (see p. 88).

## *Christoph Willibald Gluck*

charge), and both left Paris eventually, without a definite decision to satisfy their adherents.<sup>1</sup>

Curiously enough, the great majority of Gluck's operas were very bad. Handel called his music "detestable," and said that he knew no more about counterpoint than his own cook, who had the musical name of Waltz. But this was before *Orfeo*, the two *Iphigenias*, and *Alceste* had been written.

Gluck also shared Handel's habit of picking up tunes wherever he found them. He borrowed generously from his teacher, Sammartini, for his early works, and later repeated many passages of his own that he had already used.

There is a story of Gluck's appearance as a novel performer at the Haymarket Theater, London, in 1746. According to a letter of Walpole's and the *General Advertiser*, he "played a concerto on twenty-six drinking-glasses tuned with spring water (*sic*), accompanied with the whole band, being a new instrument of his own invention; upon which he performs whatever may be done on a violin or harpsichord." It was to this instrument that Oliver Goldsmith's ladies referred fifteen years later, when they elegantly discussed "Shakespeare and the musical glasses."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> It is to Piccinni's credit that after Gluck's death, in 1787, he tried to found an annual concert in his memory, describing his former rival as a genius "to whom the lyrical theatre is as much indebted as is the French stage to the great Corneille." Altogether he was the better behaved of the two.

<sup>2</sup> Gluck was trained, at Prague and elsewhere, as a player of the organ,

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Gluck was described by contemporaries as tall, heavy, muscular, inclined toward stoutness, with a large, red face, deeply pitted by smallpox. He had a loud, raucous voice, and banged on the harpsichord when he played. He was very blunt in conversation and had a bad temper.

But this rough Chevalier, who stirred up Paris to such a fury of controversy, was responsible for the most important reforms in the history of opera. He married a rich girl, Marianne Pergin, waiting until her father's death made her fortune secure, and was then able to experiment with composition in various styles, without the danger of starving to death in the process.

It was the librettist, Metastasio,<sup>1</sup> who provided the greatest handicaps for Gluck in his operatic development. This poet was a slave to the artificial, unconvincing style that had become traditional in French and Italian opera, and his work bristled with absurdities, undramatic and insincere.

Gluck became more and more convinced that realism and honesty were possible even in so superficial an art-form as grand opera. Unconsciously he was trying to restore the ideals that had inspired the Florentine "Camерата" in their operatic interpretation of Greek drama, which speedily degenerated into a hodgepodge of technical display and a perpetual war of artistic temperaments.

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harpsichord, violin, and cello, as well as in singing, and could not have taken the "musical glasses" as seriously as his listeners evidently did.

<sup>1</sup> This was the same Metastasio who befriended the youthful Haydn at about the same time (see page 57).

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The two men who made it possible for him to start his reformation were Count Durazzo and Ranieri Calzabigi, both Italians, but powerful in Viennese musical circles. Durazzo, who acted as "gentleman manager" of the imperial theater of Vienna, had engaged Gluck as early as 1754 to compose "theatrical and chamber-musical matters" for the Court. When Calzabigi turned up in 1761, as a natural rival to Metastasio, Durazzo promptly teamed him with Gluck, and the result was *Orfeo ed Euridice*.

### GLUCK VS. METASTASIO

Calzabigi's own words give the situation clearly: "Everyone in Vienna knows that the imperial poet, Metastasio, belittled Gluck, and that the feeling was mutual; for Gluck thought little of Metastasio's meticulous dramas. He was of the opinion that this high-flown poetry and these neatly manufactured characters had nothing that was great and elevated to offer to music . . . . Gluck hated those meek political, philosophical, and moral views of Metastasio's, his metaphors, his gar- rulous little passions, his geometrically devised word- plays. Gluck liked emotions captured from simple nature, mighty passions at boiling point and, at the climax of their outbreak, loud theatrical tumults. The imperial poet, on the other hand, took delight in ingenious flowers of speech, which he liked to present in the form of antitheses, in amorous disputes, in academic dis- courses, in petty characters one and all full of lovelorn

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affectation. The minds of these two were diametrically opposed to each other."<sup>1</sup>

*Orpheus and Eurydice* did not prove an immediate success, and Gluck went back to Metastasio for several more productions, which naturally were no improvement. He returned to Calzabigi for the creation of the work that really introduced his protest against the conventions of opera, *Alceste*. The dedication to Peter Leopold, Grand Duke of Tuscany (later Emperor Leopold II) contains the essence of Gluck's revolutionary ideas, and is therefore worth quoting at some length:<sup>2</sup>

YOUR ROYAL HIGHNESS,

When I undertook to write the music for *Alceste*, I resolved to divest it entirely of all those abuses, introduced into it either by the mistaken vanity of singers or by the too great complaisance of composers, which have so long disfigured Italian opera and made of the most splendid and most beautiful of spectacles the most ridiculous and wearisome. I have striven to restrict music to its true office of serving poetry by means of expression and by following the situations of the story, without interrupting the action or stifling it with a useless superfluity of ornaments; and I believed that it should do this in the same way as telling colors affect a correct and well-ordered drawing, by a well-assorted contrast of light and shade, which serves to animate the figures without altering their contours. Thus I did not wish to arrest an actor in the greatest heat of dialogue in order to wait for a tiresome *ritornello*, nor to hold him up in the middle of a word on a vowel favorable to his voice, nor to make display of the agility of his

<sup>1</sup> The quotation is from Eric Blom's translation of Alfred Einstein's *Gluck*, published by E. P. Dutton & Co., New York.

<sup>2</sup> This manifesto was probably written by Calzabigi, although signed by Gluck. In any case, it represents the composer's fundamental thesis. The version is again that of Blom-Einstein.

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fine voice in some long-drawn passage, nor to wait while the orchestra gives him time to recover his breath for a cadenza . . . in short, I have sought to abolish all the abuses against which good sense and reason have long cried out in vain . . . .

Furthermore, I believed that my greatest labor should be devoted to seeking a beautiful simplicity, and I have avoided making displays of difficulty at the expense of clearness; nor did I judge it desirable to discover novelties if it was not naturally suggested by the situation and the expression; and there is no rule which I have not thought it right to set aside willingly for the sake of an intended effect.

Such are my principles. By good fortune my designs were wonderfully furthered by the libretto, in which the celebrated author, devising a new dramatic scheme, had substituted for florid descriptions, unnatural paragons, and sententious, cold morality, heartfelt language, strong passions, interesting situations, and an endlessly varied spectacle. . . . The great protector of the fine arts, who reigns over a nation that had the glory of making them arise again from universal oppression and which itself has produced the greatest models, in a city<sup>1</sup> that was always the first to shake off the yoke of vulgar prejudices in order to clear a path for perfection, may alone undertake the reform of that noble spectacle in which all the fine arts take so great a share. If this should succeed, the glory of having moved the first stone will remain for me, and in this public testimonial of Your Highness's furtherance of the same, I have the honor to subscribe myself, with the most humble respect,

Your Royal Highness's

Most humble, most devoted and most obliged servant,  
CHRISTOFORO GLUCK

### VIENNA TO PARIS

*Alceste* was followed shortly by *Paride ed Elena* (*Paris and Helen*) which also had a prefatory explanation of

<sup>1</sup> Florence.

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the Gluck-Calzabigi principles. It was the least successful of their three collaborations, and they did no more work together. But Metastasio had been thoroughly defeated and no longer figured in the operatic life of Europe. Gluck's theories may not have been entirely new, yet he was able to give them sufficient practical illustration to make them effective.

Vienna, however, did not appreciate the new style of opera, and Gluck eventually left for Paris, where the future Queen Marie Antoinette was a powerful influence in his favor. He also had won the interest of Bailly du Roullet, an attaché of the French embassy in Vienna, who supplied him with the text for *Iphigenia in Aulis*, based upon Racine's drama.

This French diplomat proved most helpful in paving the way for a Parisian production, writing an open letter to one of the directors of the Opera, in which he told how indignant "M. Glouch" was at the insolent assertion that the French language was not fit to be set to music, etc. Gluck followed this up with a carefully phrased communication to the *Mercure de France*, modestly disclaiming any great distinction, and referring in complimentary terms to Jean Jacques Rousseau and others.

There were polite rejoinders to the effect that one such opera would put the French repertoire so far in the shade that it should hardly be produced unless its composer were willing to promise six more of the same sort. (Gluck was already nearly sixty years old, and this may have been a halfhearted attempt to keep him away.)

## *Christoph Willibald Gluck*

In any case, *Iphigenie en Aulide* arrived at a Parisian performance on April 19, 1774, and was an immediate sensation. The Dauphiness (Marie Antoinette) wrote to her sister, Marie Christine: "A great triumph, my dear Christine! On the nineteenth we had the first performance of *Iphigénie*; I was carried away by it, and people can no longer talk of anything else. All heads are buzzing as a result of this event, as much as could possibly be imagined—it is incredible; there are dissensions and quarrels, as though it were a matter of some religious dispute. At court, although I publicly expressed myself in favor of this inspired work, there are partisanships and debates of a particular liveliness; and in town it seems to be worse still."

This was the beginning of the great argument which lasted until Gluck left Paris in 1780. He was accused of writing music that had "little melody, little nature, and little elegance or refinement." People declared that the noise of his orchestra was necessary to drown out his "clumsy modulations." (Gluck was actually the first composer to use the bass drum and cymbals in operatic music.) There were uncomplimentary references to his "harsh and rugged harmony, the incoherent modulations, mutilations, and incongruities contained in his airs." It is difficult to reconcile such opinions with the limpid beauty of Gluck's music as we know it today.

But Paris wanted to hear more of "M. Glouch," and so he made a French version of his *Orpheus*, rewriting the contralto part of the hero for the tenor voice of

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M. Legros. This was followed by a revival of *Alceste*, and finally Gluck composed the charmingly melodious *Armide*, especially for his Parisian listeners. By this time Piccinni had been imported by his detractors, and the controversy was at its height.

The second *Iphigenia* ("in Tauris") left Gluck comfortably ahead in the race for fame and wealth, and even though his *Echo and Narcissus* was a failure he was able to retire to Vienna, full of years and riches, to wait for the apoplectic death that overtook him in 1787. "I shall not write another opera hereafter," he said before leaving Paris. "My career is finished; my age and the disgust I had to endure lately in connection with my opera of *Narcissus* have forever put me out of conceit to write still others."

He wished Piccinni's *Atys* "a good success," chiefly that he might himself remain "unmolested." In March, 1780, he wrote, "But as to my going to Paris again, nothing will come of it, so long as the words 'Piccinnist' and 'Gluckist' remain current, for I am, thank God, in good health at present, and have no wish to spit bile again in Paris. . . . I shall hardly allow myself to be persuaded again to become the object of the criticism or the praise of the French nation, for they are as changeable as red cockerels; if it were to be, it would have to be made very comfortable, since idling is now my only pleasure."

A few months later he added, "If the stupid reasonings were to grow out of fashion, which arise there out of

### *Christoph Willibald Gluck*

music and spectacles, I might perhaps resolve once more to go there, and to whistle something more to them; however, I no longer trust them; the burnt child fears the fire."

But he lent his name to one more production, *Les Danaides*, a curious mixture of Calzabigi, Du Roullet, Tschudi, Gluck, and Salieri, whose music is mostly a burlesque of the real genius of the composer, and whose libretto was largely stolen from its actual creator, Calzabigi himself. A hard, courageous, and eminently successful businessman, this Chevalier von Gluck! Composers are not always the poverty-stricken scapegoats of a practical world.

## V

*Papa Haydn's Little Jokes*

HE orchestra at Esterhaz is having its dinner in the servants' quarters, and *Kapellmeister* Franz Joseph Haydn, according to his custom, is eating with them. There is a charming informality among these men, and they are tremendously fond of their leader, who allows them to talk and act pretty much as they please, so long as they play well.

On this particular evening of the early 1770's, however, there is evidence of dissatisfaction among the musicians. They are intent on collective bargaining, and, so long as the food holds out, there is serious danger of a sit-down strike.

"This place may be a great real estate development," says the first violinist, Tomasini, "but what is home without a wife?"

"Prince Nicolaus is so good to us," answers Haydn, softly. "We should not ask for the company of women."

*Franz Joseph Haydn*

"That's easy for you to say," interrupts Weigl, the cellist, rudely, "married to a shrew anybody would be glad to leave at home."

Haydn does not seem to mind this frankness. He smiles benignly and silences them with a gesture.

"Quiet, please! Never mind my own wife, who should be with me at this moment, God forbid. Prince Esterhazy is a generous patron, the best provider that any gang of temperamental noisemakers ever sponged on. He'll let you go home when he is good and ready. What's the matter with Esterhaz anyway?"

"A rotten swamp, turned into an artificial Paradise. What do we want with a hunting-lodge and two theaters and clipped hedges and flower beds laid out like Christmas cakes?" It is Hirsch, the flute player, speaking.

"Don't mention Christmas," shouts Andreas Lidl, expert on the viola di bordone, the Prince's favorite instrument. "We're homesick enough as it is."

"Boys, I can't promise anything about getting you back home on a vacation," says Haydn, "but I'll do what I can. This situation calls for diplomacy. Maybe I can work out something that will give the Prince a broad idea of what you want."

The threatened strike broke up in good humor, and they rehearsed loyally for their genial little conductor, whose inherent good nature showed itself in frequent smiles, curiously at odds with the dark complexion, the aquiline nose, and the prominent underlip of the sensitive face under its white wig. There was no ques-

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tion of Haydn's popularity with the whole Esterhazy household.

The "diplomacy" of the conductor was revealed a few evenings later. At the close of the program performed for Prince Nicolaus Esterhazy, wealthy patron of the arts, stood an innocent-looking symphony, without any particular title. Its Finale began at a rapid pace, then slowed down to a dismal Adagio. As the music progressed, the musicians dropped out, one by one, each blowing out his candle as he departed. Finally only two violinists, Tomasini and Rosetti, were left, and eventually these two also blew out their candles, picked up their music, and left the stage. Haydn stood uncertainly at the conductor's desk, listening to the scattered applause.

Finally, to his great relief, the Prince spoke. "If they all go," he said, laughing, "then we may as well go too." The orchestra was dismissed the following day, and everybody went home happily. The musical composition that did the trick has been known ever since as Haydn's *Farewell Symphony*.

### JUST A SKETCH

Jokes came naturally to this unpretentious little man, and sometimes they were not entirely appreciated. As a chorister in his boyhood, at St. Stephen's in Vienna, he got into plenty of scrapes, one of which brought down the wrath of the Empress Maria Theresa. The boys were on an outing at Schönbrunn, and little Franz was the

## Franz Joseph Haydn

one to climb up highest on the scaffolding, where the palace was being repaired. At that moment the Empress looked out of the window.

"See that that boy gets a good whipping," she ordered briefly, and the royal command was thoroughly carried out.

Years later, when the Empress visited Esterhaz, Haydn reminded her of that painful incident. "I am glad to see that the whipping had a good effect," she commented, with regal satisfaction.

Another early escapade had more serious consequences. Young Haydn, still unaccustomed to city manners, after a peasant boyhood in rural Croatia, acquired a new pair of scissors, and could not resist snipping off the pigtail of a fellow-student at St. Stephen's. He was whipped again, and summarily dismissed from the school, to shift for himself in the streets of Vienna.

He managed to borrow some money, give a few music lessons, fiddle for dancing, and in other ways keep himself alive. A comic actor, Felix Kurtz, gave him his first chance as a composer, paying him 25 ducats for the music to an operatic farce, *Der neue krumme Teufel* (*The New Crooked Devil*), which evidently made quite a hit.

Luckily the attic in which Haydn lived was above the apartments shared by the Italian poet, Metastasio, with the Martinez family, whose daughters he taught. One of the girls became Haydn's pupil, and through her he met the great singing-teacher, Niccolo Porpora, formerly Handel's operatic rival. From this musician Haydn

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learned much about composing, acting as his accompanist and valet combined, cleaning his boots and doing all kinds of menial service in return for instruction, board, and lodging.

Progressing gradually to the position of musical director for Count Morzin, Haydn characteristically decided to get married on an income averaging about \$100 a year. He was in love with the youngest daughter of Keller, the wig-maker, but she decided in favor of the life of a nun. The wig-maker, with a prospective son-in-law in his clutches, persuaded Haydn to take his older daughter, Maria Anna, as a substitute, and so the composer's henpecked life began.<sup>1</sup>

Haydn promptly lost his job, but was recommended by Count Morzin to Prince Paul Anton Esterhazy, who had already been impressed with his work. It required a new symphony to remind the Prince of the composer's existence, but eventually Haydn found himself at Eisenstadt, and later Esterhaz, the elaborate estate developed by Paul's brother, Nicolaus.<sup>2</sup>

It was at Esterhaz that Haydn composed most of his music, having at his disposal not only a fine orchestra

<sup>1</sup> She was three years older than Haydn, and to call her a shrew was an understatement. They remained married for forty years, but Haydn had the satisfaction of outliving her for nine years, after she had demanded money to buy a cottage "for her widowhood." Haydn bought the cottage, but lived in it himself, as a happy and contented widower.

<sup>2</sup> Prince Paul Anton Esterhazy died in 1762, but his younger brother, often called "the Magnificent," was an even greater patron of music and other arts, lavish in his expenditures, and with excellent taste.

## *Franz Joseph Haydn*

and singers, but two theaters, marionettes, and other luxuries that inspired him to constant creative activity.

At Eisenstadt he had already composed about thirty symphonies, including those with programmatic titles, like *Le Midi*, *Le Soir*, and *Le Matin*, later followed by *L'Ours*, *La Poule*, *La Reine*, *La Chasse*, and other fanciful names. At Esterhaz he concentrated more on opera, but still produced plenty of purely instrumental music.

He also visited Vienna occasionally, and there met young Mozart, whom he admired enormously, first teaching him what he knew, and then learning from him in turn. Haydn's best symphonies were all written after he knew Mozart. Their friendship was one of the rare instances of complete and mutual understanding between two musicians, entirely free from jealousy, each one thoroughly appreciating the abilities of the other. It was Mozart who first gave Haydn the nickname of "Papa," which stuck to him to the end of his life, although he had no children of his own. But his attitude toward all younger musicians, even toward music itself, was consistently paternal.

### THE LONDON SYMPHONIES

The death of Prince Nicolaus in 1790 left Haydn free to travel as he wished, particularly as he was supplied with an excellent pension. The English impresario, Salomon, who had long been trying to bring him across the Channel, now turned up in person, and persuaded Haydn to go back with him. He was obviously delighted

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to get away from his nagging wife, although there were other ladies whom he left more reluctantly.<sup>1</sup> The parting with Mozart was hardest of all.

The young composer, who had also been invited by Salomon, tried to persuade Haydn against the London journey, but without success. They spent a last day together in Vienna, and when Mozart saw him off, he said, forebodingly, "We shall see each other no more in this world." He was right, but it was the young man, not the veteran, who died within a year.

One anecdote stands out in connection with the efforts to bring Haydn to London. An English publisher, Bland, had visited him in advance of Salomon, and happened to walk in one day while the composer was shaving. "I would give my best quartet for a good razor," exclaimed Haydn, in the midst of his struggles. The Englishman hurried back to his lodgings to bring him a fine set of razors, made of English steel. Haydn kept his word and presented Bland with the quartet (Trautwein, No. 2)

<sup>1</sup> In spite of his insignificant appearance, Haydn was always popular with women. There was quite a scandal at Esterhaz over his personal interest in Luigia Polzelli, an Italian singer, who treated him abominably, but must have been passionately fond of him in a sadistic fashion. In England Haydn was hotly pursued by an estimable widow, Mrs. John Samuel Schroeter, whose husband had been the Queen's music master. In his old age, Haydn once pointed to a packet of letters and said "Those are from an English widow who fell in love with me. She was a very attractive woman, and still handsome, though over sixty; and had I been free I should certainly have married her." It is generally assumed that on his second visit to London Haydn took lodgings at No. 1 Bury St., St. James's, in order to be near Mrs. Schroeter, who lived in James St., Buckingham Gate.

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which has since been known as the *Rasirmesser (Razor Quartet)*.

The visit to London proved completely successful, and Haydn found himself honored as he had never been in his own country (There is something in that much quoted line about prophets.)

He arrived with Salomon on New Year's Day, 1791, and they took lodgings in the same house, "nice, but very dear." Haydn objected to the "late" hour for dining, 6 p.m., and arranged to have his dinner at four in the afternoon. He had agreed to produce six new symphonies, and rehearsals began immediately, with an orchestra of about forty musicians. Haydn made a tactful speech to the men, which was interpreted by Salomon (a German by birth). But the composer had his difficulties. The symphony selected for the first concert (No. 2 in the Salomon series) begins with three notes on the same pitch, D. For some reason this simple opening did not sound right to Haydn. After he had made them try it several times, one of the players spoke up: "I say, if the first three notes don't please him, how can we get through the rest?"

But the performance, in the Hanover Square Rooms, proved thoroughly successful, and the Adagio of the symphony was encored, "a very rare occurrence." Dr. Burney, the musical historian, wrote a poem to Haydn. He was entertained by the Anacreontic Society and other important organizations. Oxford gave him a doctor's degree, and he wrote a special symphony for the occa-

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sion, but the time for rehearsal was so short that an older symphony, originally written for Paris, was substituted, and this is now known as *The Oxford Symphony*. Eyewitnesses reported that when Haydn received his degree, he "lifted his gown as high as possible" and said, in English, "I thank you."

The third of the symphonies written for Salomon at this time is the popular *Surprise*, which gets its name from the fact that the slow theme, played very softly, is suddenly interrupted by a crashing chord. "There the ladies will scream," said Haydn, and it has been unkindly suggested that he wanted to make sure of waking up his listeners at this point.

Haydn composed six more symphonies for Salomon on a second visit, and several of these also have special names. They are all known by the general title of *The London Symphonies*, although this name is also applied particularly to the seventh in the Philharmonic list, in D, which Haydn himself designated "the twelfth which I have composed in England." Another, for obvious reasons, has the descriptive phrase "with the drum roll" (*Paukenwirbel*, not to be confused with the *Paukenschlag* of the *Surprise*).

The symphony called *The Clock* gets its title from a realistic imitation of the "ticktock" effect, in the second movement. There is also a *Military Symphony*, most of which seems to have no martial significance whatever, although it makes use of the bass drum, triangle, and

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cymbals combination, known at that time as "Turkish" or "military" music.

While in London, Haydn heard some magnificent performances of Handel's music, which, now that its composer was dead, had become so popular that the English began giving anniversary performances a year ahead of time (1784) and kept them up as an annual event. When the *Hallelujah Chorus* resounded in Westminster Abbey, with everyone standing, Haydn burst into tears and cried "He is the master of us all!" He determined then to try his own hand at oratorio, and later accepted the idea of *The Creation* from Salomon, taking with him to Vienna a poem by Lidley, based on Milton's *Paradise Lost* and originally intended for Handel.

Haydn's good friend, Freiherr van Swieten, persuaded him to set this to music and himself made a German translation, with considerable revision, besides raising a guarantee of 500 ducats. "Never was I so pious," writes Haydn in his diary, "as when I was composing *The Creation*. I knelt down every day and prayed God to strengthen me for my work."

After the first performance, at Prince Schwarzenberg's palace, the composer wrote, "One moment I was as cold as ice, the next I seemed on fire. More than once I was afraid I should have a stroke."

*The Creation* was so successful that Salomon threatened to sue Haydn for stealing his idea, but wisely decided to make money for himself by giving it in London, al-

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though a rival impresario, Ashley, beat him by nearly a month. Van Swieten insisted that Haydn write another oratorio, and prepared for him the text of *The Seasons*, adapted from Thomson's poem.<sup>1</sup>

This was almost equally successful, but it took the remainder of Haydn's creative power, and he composed little after that. He often said later, "*The Seasons* gave me the finishing stroke."

The Emperor Francis once asked Haydn which of his two oratorios he preferred. The aged composer answered without hesitation, "*The Creation.*" Asked for his reason, he said, "Because in *The Creation* angels speak, and their talk is of God. In *The Seasons* no one higher speaks than Farmer Simon."

### THE END DRAWS NEAR

Haydn's final public appearance was at a performance of *The Creation* by the Society of Amateurs in Vienna, March 27, 1808. The old man, now on the threshold of his seventy-sixth birthday, was carried into the hall of the university in his armchair, after Prince Esterhazy's carriage had called for him. His entrance was greeted with trumpets, drums, and prolonged applause, and he found himself surrounded by the most distinguished members of the Austrian nobility.

<sup>1</sup> In this work there is a melody, representing a ploughboy's whistle, which is the same as the famous Andante of the *Surprise Symphony*. It is quite possibly a folk-tune. Compare it melodically with the main theme of Enesco's *Roumanian Rhapsody*, and rhythmically with the familiar ABC nursery rhyme.

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Salieri conducted the performance.<sup>1</sup> At the climax, on the words, "And there was light," the audience burst into a sudden frenzy of hand-clapping and cheers. Haydn, greatly moved, pointed upward and cried, "It came from there."

His excitement grew so intense that it was thought best to carry him out after the first part. He was followed by demonstrations of reverent affection, Beethoven stepping forward to kiss his hand and forehead. At the door Haydn turned to look back at the crowd, and lifted his hands in a gesture of blessing. It was the perfect exit for the most beloved composer of his time.

There is one other composition of Haydn that deserves special mention, and that is the so-called *Emperor's Hymn*, adopted as the Austrian national anthem and appearing also as the slow theme with variations in his *Kaiserquartett*, opus 76, no. 3. The composer was deeply impressed by the English *God Save the King*, and received from it his first inclination to write a patriotic melody, which was strengthened by the war with France.

Freiherr van Swieten was again helpful, and succeeded in having the poet, Lorenz Leopold Hauschka, commissioned to write the text, "*Gott erhalte Franz den Kaiser.*" The anthem was first sung publicly at all the Austrian theaters on the Emperor's birthday, February 12, 1797, and made an immediate and lasting impression. It has since been widely used as a hymn tune, and was

<sup>1</sup> He was then head of the school for imperial choristers, which was to be entered that year by a boy named Franz Schubert.

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also given a general German significance later with the words, "*Deutschland, Deutschland über alles,*" whose misinterpretation at the time of the World War brought the song into temporary disrepute.<sup>1</sup>

Unfortunately it is impossible to give Haydn full credit for this great melody, for it has been definitely proved that its foundation was a Croatian folk-song. He used the same fruitful source for many other tunes appearing in his string quartets, his symphonies, the Rondo of his piano concerto in D, the *Mass*, "*Hier liegt vor deiner Majestät,*" and other compositions.

It was the *Emperor's Hymn* that served as Haydn's musical farewell to the world. A few days before his death, he called his servants about him and asked that he be carried to the piano. There he played his favorite melody three times over. He died an hour after midnight, on the morning of May 31, 1809. Papa Haydn's little jokes were forgotten in the world-wide tribute to a great creative genius.

<sup>1</sup> The actual meaning is that Germans place their country above everything else in their hearts, not that Germany is called superior to all the rest of the world, as so many have been led to believe.

## VI

### *Mozart Writes His Own Requiem*



HIS story begins with the death of its hero. Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (the Amadeus was fancy Latin for the German Gottlieb) died in 1791, when he was only thirty-five years old. But it was his own premonition of death and the music that it produced that made this tragedy unique in musical history.

Mozart is in Vienna, a city that he loves in spite of its cruel treatment of him, where his opera, *The Magic Flute*, is about to be produced. His wife, Constanze, originally one of the singing Webers, has just had her fourth child (but only the second to survive) in Baden.

The young genius is worried over his debts, his failure to achieve recognition in his own country, his ailing wife, and the bad state of his own health, broken down by repeated illness from the early days of his precocious childhood. There is a knock on the door, and a stranger enters. He is dressed in gray, coldly somber and forbid-

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ding in appearance. He hands Mozart a letter and vanishes.

It is an order for a *Requiem Mass*, but from whom it comes is a mystery. The composer may name his own price, but the identity of his patron must remain a secret. Mozart, who needs money desperately, accepts the commission. But he cannot escape a strange feeling that it is Death himself who has commanded this final work from his inspired pen.

Mozart begins work immediately, but meets with an unexpected interruption. The city of Prague, where his *Figaro* and *Don Giovanni* have met with a success that Vienna has thus far denied them, insists on having a new opera to celebrate the crowning of Emperor Leopold II as King of Bohemia. A libretto by Metastasio has been selected, *La Clemenza di Tito*, a stupid, old-fashioned piece of work that Mozart would ordinarily have scorned to touch. But he cannot offend the city that, in his own words, "understands him" better than any other, and he still needs money.

With his wife and a pupil, Süssmayr, he arranges to leave for Prague, where the opera must be written in eighteen days. As he is about to step into the coach, a hand is laid on his arm. It is the mysterious stranger.

"You are leaving for a journey?" he asks. "What about the *Requiem Mass*?"

Again Mozart feels the chill of horror, the nameless presentiment. He stammers an excuse. "It is the Emperor's order. I shall be back soon."

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"How soon?" demands the stranger coldly.

"Very soon. I am working on it. The *Requiem* will be delivered—in time."

The stranger bows and is gone, while the trembling little composer drives off in an agony of terror.

The new opera is written, but it is a failure, even in friendly Prague. Mozart weeps at the opening performance, and the production of *The Magic Flute*, with an increasing success at every performance, has little consolation for him. The composition of the *Requiem* has become an obsession, and he works at it feverishly, as if aware that he may not live to see it completed.

He confides to his wife that death is now always in his thoughts. "I am writing this *Requiem* for myself."

For a time he suffers from the delusion that he has been poisoned. Judging by the attitude of his rival composers, there are plenty who would be glad to substitute such direct murder for the slow death in which they have cooperated so enthusiastically. (Salieri himself, on his death-bed, whimpered, "I did not poison Mozart.")

Actually the *Requiem* was never finished by its composer.<sup>1</sup> Mozart did his last writing in bed, or sitting in an invalid's chair, while his friends came in to try the parts and cheer him up as best they could. But Mozart's premonition was correct. When they sang the *Lacrimosa*, with his own voice scarcely able to keep up the alto part, he burst into tears. Early in the morning of the

<sup>1</sup> Süssmayr completed the work, partly from notes left by Mozart.

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fifth of December, 1791, he turned his face to the wall and died. Technically it was a malignant typhus fever that killed him.

The explanation of the mysterious commission which mentally and physically hastened Mozart's death is comparatively simple. There was a certain Count Walsegg, a wealthy amateur, who wanted to make a reputation as a composer. He sent his steward to order the *Requiem* from Mozart and actually had it performed as his own work. Naturally the matter had to be kept a secret.

### DOES GENIUS PAY?

The tragic irony of the *Requiem* is in the fact that it was one of Mozart's few definite commissions, and, as compared with others, it paid him fairly well.<sup>1</sup>

All his life Mozart needed patronage, a salaried position of some sort, or at least the security of composing to order, with an assured financial return. Bach never had any difficulty finding a job; Handel made and lost fortunes, but died a wealthy man; Haydn was secure in the service of Prince Esterhazy the greater part of his creative life, with a liberal pension at the end; Gluck knew how to pull the political wires, and lived his last years in Vienna as court "chamber composer," with a decent salary and practically no work. Mozart, potentially the

<sup>1</sup> He was given 50 ducats (about \$112) in advance, and some say he would have received that much again if he had finished it. But he was buried in a pauper's grave, with not a single friend to mourn him at the last.

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greatest creative artist of them all, had to struggle along, giving music lessons, gambling on personal concert appearances, writing potboilers for mechanical music boxes. His operas made money for everyone concerned in them, but little for the composer himself.

When Gluck died, Mozart was his logical successor and was actually given the court position. But the miserly Emperor Joseph cut down the salary from 2,000 gulden to 800, and, having secured his man so cheaply, gave him no work to do. Mozart found himself in the position of those querulous Hollywood artists who complain because, while under contract, they are given no assignments; the difference, however, is that Mozart's salary was about \$360 a year. In acknowledging one of his payments, he wrote on the receipt "Too much for what I produce; too little for what I could produce."

### **WAS MOZART TO BLAME?**

So Mozart's whole life was really a constant and losing struggle for the practical rewards that should have come to his unquestioned genius. He suffered from the jealous hostility of his fellow artists, like every other great musician. But his own lack of tact was also partly to blame for his consistent poverty, which was further increased by the complete lack of system or management on the part of his wife and himself.

Mozart was outspoken in his opinions, and the frankness of such a youngster must have been irritating at times. After defeating Clementi in a piano-playing con-

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test, he was rude enough to write, "He has not the slightest bit of taste or feeling, in fact he is merely a mechanical player," later calling him "a charlatan" and his compositions "valueless." Yet Mozart borrowed a theme from Clementi's *Sonata in D* for the Overture to his own *Magic Flute*.

When the Emperor said of an aria in one of his operas, "It has too many notes in it," Mozart's rather cocky answer was, "Sire, there are just as many notes in it as there ought to be." His self-assurance was an almost necessary part of his precocity, yet his personality was obviously fascinating. Contemporaries all emphasize his small stature, his rather large nose, the bright, snapping eyes, the quick grace of his movements, and the spontaneity of his actions. He should have been a practical success, but he definitely was not.

There are many stories of the incredible speed at which Mozart worked, as well as his careless habits of procrastination. The night before the première of his greatest opera, *Don Giovanni*, he went to a party and had to be sent home to write out the Overture, so that it could be copied and played the next evening. He sat up all night, with his wife telling him stories to keep him awake. The Overture was finished, but it was played at sight, with the ink still wet upon the pages.

The three great symphonies, in E-flat, G minor and C (*Jupiter*) were all written within six weeks (June 26 to August 10) in the year 1788, and this was when the composer was in the depths of despair, borrowing money

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where he could and wondering why Fortune treated him so badly.

The fundamental mistake was probably his exploitation as a prodigy. His father, Leopold Mozart, could not resist showing off the "*Wunderkind*" (with his gifted older sister), and those premature concert tours not only undermined the boy's health but seriously affected his later standing as an adult composer. At fourteen he could no longer be presented as a precocious child, yet his youth interfered with his recognition among older men, and, even though he continued to show genius in practically everything that he produced, there was a psychological difficulty about accepting him as a mature artist. Only Haydn thoroughly appreciated the boy, and treated him as an equal, eventually even a superior.

Mozart dedicated his first six string quartets to Haydn, and he frankly confessed, "It was from Haydn that I learned to write quartets." Haydn in turn said to Leopold Mozart, in all sincerity, "I declare to you before God, as a man of honor, that your son is the greatest composer I know, either personally or by reputation; he has taste, and beyond that the most consummate knowledge of the art of composition."

Mozart secured his best operatic results with the co-operation of Lorenzo da Ponte as librettist. They wrote *The Marriage of Figaro* entirely on faith, as the original Beaumarchais comedy had been barred from the stage as indecent, and there was no telling whether the Emperor Joseph would permit its performance. Da Ponte

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was the diplomat in this instance, and in spite of the treachery of some of the singers on the opening night, *Figaro* was a great success. But the total sum earned by Mozart from this great opera was not more than \$200.

It was *Figaro*, however, that made the composer's reputation in Prague, and this Bohemian city continued to recognize his genius while Vienna remained apathetic. *Don Giovanni* was written in and especially for Prague, with Mozart and Da Ponte living across the street from each other, so close that they could shout ideas and instructions from their windows when they chose. There is a legend that Casanova himself had a share in the writing of this opera. Certainly Da Ponte had him in mind when developing the character of his hero. Out of *Don Giovanni* Mozart actually made as much as \$225, just a little more than his net return from *Figaro*. *The Magic Flute* showed about the same profit for its composer, although it made huge sums for the librettist and impresario, Schikaneder, who continued to produce it for years after Mozart's death.

One of Mozart's earliest operas, written when he was a mere child, was called *Bastien et Bastienne*. It is not an important work, but interesting for two reasons: first because it was commissioned by Dr. Anton Mesmer, a famous hypnotist, whose name survives in the word "mesmerism"; second, because it supplied Beethoven with the opening theme for his *Eroica Symphony*.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See p. 91.

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A still earlier opera, *La Finta Semplice*, was sidetracked through court intrigues, causing Mozart's father to burst out with the accusation that "the whole hell of music has bestirred itself to prevent a child's talent from being recognized." Having made the mistake of exploiting his amazing son too soon, he spent the rest of his life trying to persuade him of the necessity of winning royal favor, but without success. He was dead by the time Wolfgang had arrived at his one pitiful position at the Viennese court.

### VARIOUS COMPOSITIONS

Many of Mozart's best pieces were written simply because he had nothing else to do. Often they were personal courtesies to friends. He dedicated much music to his charming and irresponsible young wife, but finished little of it.

There was the Haffner family, in Mozart's native Salzburg, for whom he wrote the symphony and the *Serenade* now known by their name, both in D major. There was the singer Rauzzini, for whom he composed a motet containing the now familiar *Alleluja*, when he was only seventeen years old. Six piano sonatas were written in quick succession, merely that Mozart might have something to play in his concerts. At one time, when hard up for cash, he turned out seven *Minuets* and six *Contredances* and sold them for dance music.

There is a story that Mozart, in passing a bird store, one day heard a starling sing the exact notes of a theme

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from his own *Piano Concerto in G major*. His delight and astonishment were so great that he bought the bird and kept it for years, writing down in his account book the price of 34 kreutzer and the notes which he had heard. Since the concerto was written over a month before this entry, it seems reasonable to suppose that the bird song did not come first, and the coincidence is a possible one.

Mozart wrote his first important opera, *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* (*The Abduction from the Seraglio*) in order to make enough money to get married. He had fallen in love with Aloysia Weber, one of four sisters, all of whom were musical, first cousins of the coming composer, Carl Maria von Weber.

But when Aloysia became an operatic success,<sup>1</sup> she forgot all about the young composer, and he soon found that it was her sister Constanze whom he really loved. They lived in a lodging-house called *Am Auge Gottes* (At the Eye of God) and Mozart made a characteristic musician's joke by referring to his marriage as *Die Entführung aus dem Auge Gottes*. The opera itself was a concession to the "Turkish music" fashionable at the time (consisting mostly of the use of a bass drum, triangle, and cymbals). Mozart gave the heroine his wife's name, Constanze.

But after all, it was Mozart's childhood that represented the happiest part of his life—the days when he astonished all Europe with his playing on the harpsichord, his improvising, and his actual compositions—

<sup>1</sup> The eldest sister, Josefa, eventually sang the Queen of the Night in *The Magic Flute*.

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when he endeared himself to the Austrian court by jumping into the lap of the Empress Maria Theresa and kissing her heartily. It was a pity that this unique combination of talent and personality could not have been developed to maturity in a more practical and logical fashion. It was a hideous tragedy that the stupidity of a small and selfish world should have kept such genius from the fullness of expression that it deserved.

## VII

### *Beethoven Learns about People*



THE trouble with you, Beethoven," said Johann Nepomuk Mälzel portentously, "is that you have no showmanship. A good composer, but completely ignorant of what the public wants, or how to give it to them."

The stocky little man, with beetling brows and a heavily lined face, received this comment in silence. Ludwig van Beethoven was used to being criticized. Everything he composed seemed to fill someone with horror or indignation. Why couldn't he write such charming pieces as were constantly produced by Pleyel and Dussek and Hummel, all tremendously popular and sure to win immortality for their creators? Well, it was just not his style. He would write as he chose, and they could take it or leave it.

But Mälzel had an idea. He was always full of ideas, a really successful inventor in his way. One of his best

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ideas was the Metronome, that little wooden pyramid that still stands on pianos, with a pendulum swinging wrong side up, keeping time for thousands of suffering children who have been forced to practice ever since the time of Beethoven and even earlier. Some of us may not have liked the Metronome, but at least it was practical. Mälzel's inventions were not always practical. He invented an ear-trumpet that did not work; and often he spent his time and scientific knowledge on absurd novelties that were neither practical nor artistic.

One of these was what he called a Panharmonicon, ancestor of many a music-box, an instrument played by a revolving cylinder in a cabinet, run by bellows and making noises like a brass band. It was the Panharmonicon that now gave Mälzel an idea. "I have it!" he shouted. "You write a special symphony for my Panharmonicon, and we'll present it in a benefit concert, and then repeat it for our own benefit and make a lot of money. Then we can go to England and make a lot more. They like mechanical music over there."

"I do not compose for machines," answered Beethoven stiffly. "My symphonies are for great orchestras."

"There you go again," cried Mälzel, "no showmanship at all! You are hard up, but you refuse to accept a fine idea for making money and adding to your reputation, too. The musicians know you, but how about the big public that is always looking for a new sensation? How about all those overgrown children that have no intelligence but plenty of money to spend? Please, Bee-

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thoven, do it for my sake," he pleaded. "It needn't be good music. Make it something descriptive and imitative. Why not Wellington's Victory?<sup>1</sup> That would be popular; and we can raise money for the soldiers that were wounded at Hanau. Make a fast fugue out of *God Save the King*, with hurrah effects, and bring in some other tunes, like *Malbrouck*, dismally for the French, and then *Rule, Britannia*, to show that the English are winning. I hear it already. I could almost do it myself!"

He began marching up and down, blowing on an imaginary trumpet. Perhaps that was the trouble with *Wellington's Victory*, later known as the *Battle Symphony*. Mälzel could have written it himself, and almost did. Beethoven actually borrowed the tunes of *Malbrouck*, *Rule, Britannia*, and *God Save the King* (with a fast fugato as specified), put in some cannon shots and drumming effects, and permitted the absurd hodgepodge to be arranged for the Panharmonicon. But first he made an orchestration, and it was in this form that the piece was introduced at a benefit concert, December 8, 1813.

To his own amazement, *Wellington's Victory* won an immediate and sensational success, appealing to a public that had thus far been only dimly aware of the composer's importance. His great *Seventh Symphony*, introduced on the same program, also made a hit, but it was the arrangement of the familiar tunes, with the cheap imitation of battle noises, that really captured the enthusiasm of the audience. There was also a mechanical

<sup>1</sup> Mälzel was referring to the battle of Vittoria, June 21, 1813.

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trumpeter, another Mälzel invention, which played marches by Pleyel and Dussek, with full orchestral accompaniment. The concert made so much money for the wounded soldiers that it was repeated four days later, and again the success of the *Battle Symphony* was extraordinary.

Mälzel now began to talk seriously of his proposed trip to England. He made Beethoven a loan of 50 ducats to tide him over, and a third concert was arranged just after New Year's Day of 1814. This time the mechanical trumpeter was omitted, and it became an all-Beethoven program, with some of the *Ruins of Athens* music substituted. (Mälzel was wise enough to let the *Battle Symphony* establish its popularity in orchestral form, before giving it the additional novelty of the Panharmonicon.)

The two friends made enough profit on this third concert to justify the English tour, but Beethoven characteristically changed his mind. He was solvent again, so why not stay in Vienna?

Mälzel threatened to take the symphony and the Panharmonicon and tour England alone. Beethoven paid him back his 50 ducats, and refused to give up the symphony. Nevertheless, Mälzel took his machine to Munich and there gave two performances, piecing together the music from memory. Beethoven promptly sued him.

It is not a pretty story. The former friends fought each other in the courts, but Wellington remained the only

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victor. Eventually they made up and shared the legal costs of their foolish feud.

Mälzel finally drifted to the United States, made plenty of money, and spent his last years in Philadelphia. He died at sea, July 21, 1838, on the brig *Otis*, en route from Havana.<sup>1</sup> The *Battle Symphony* was forgotten amid the treasures of far greater music produced by its composer.

But one other incident remains to immortalize the inventor of the Metronome. In the days when his friendship with Beethoven was at its height, they were together at a dinner party. As a tribute to the inventor, Beethoven improvised a little round (technically known as a canon), which he taught the guests at table, himself singing the soprano part. "Ta-ta-ta, ta-ta-ta, lieber Mälzel" served for a text, in imitation of the Metronome itself. The melody later became the chief theme of the second movement of Beethoven's *Eighth Symphony*, a lovely bit of music, for which both of these irascible gentlemen may well be forgiven their misunderstandings.

### THE MOONLIGHT SONATA

Poor Beethoven has been made the victim of many a story that has no foundation in fact. Probably the prize fiction of them all is concerned with the so-called *Moonlight Sonata*. The composer himself never gave it that title.

<sup>1</sup> A regretful obituary in the *United States Gazette* closed, without undue optimism, as follows: "He has gone, we hope, where the music of his harmonicons will be exceeded."

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It was the critic Rellstab who said it made him think of "moonlight on the Lake of Lucerne." Some people called it the *Arbor Sonata*, because it suggested a leafy arbor to them, and may actually have been written in such surroundings.

Beethoven himself merely called it *Sonata quasi una Fantasia, in C-sharp minor*, opus 27, no. 2. It is now definitely established that if it had any special meaning, its inspiration must be credited to Seume's poem, *Die Beterin*, which tells of a girl praying for her sick father, her sighs rising with the incense at the altar, and her face lighted with hope. Actually the first movement of the *Moonlight Sonata* suggests such a picture.

But the dedication of the sonata to the Countess Giulietta Guicciardi, often considered the most important of Beethoven's beloved ladies, has created a number of sentimental interpretations and legends. One is that Beethoven stopped outside the home of the Countess, on a moonlight night, hearing one of his compositions being played. The beautiful Giulietta came out, saw him standing in the moonlight, and persuaded him to join the party. In appreciation, Beethoven sat down at the piano, improvised the *Moonlight Sonata*, and hurried home to write it down.

The facts of the dedication are that gentle Giulietta had a Beethoven *Rondo* dedicated to her, which he wanted to give to another pupil (Princess Lichnowsky). He got it away from the Countess by offering her the sonata, opus 27, no. 2, in exchange. That and the proba-

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ble background of the Seume poem may be said to complete the evidence in the case.

But if you like a good, sentimental story, here is one more legend of the *Moonlight Sonata* which has long been popular. Beethoven was wandering alone in the moonlight, nursing his pessimistic thoughts. He passed a blind boy and his sister, standing on a street corner, and, in spite of his deafness, overheard their conversation.

"If I could only hear Beethoven play," said the boy, "then perhaps I could imitate him."

"You shall hear him right now," answered the composer, in the manner of a Chevalier. And he went with them to their humble abode, sat down at the rickety piano, and improvised the *Moonlight Sonata*.

Another version is that Beethoven was passing a poor cottage and heard someone playing one of his compositions. Glancing in at the window, he saw a blind girl sitting at the piano, a shaft of moonlight falling across her beautiful hair. He entered the cottage, introduced himself gruffly, and made up the *Moonlight Sonata* on the spot.

Actually Beethoven rather resented the popularity of this sonata, as he considered it distinctly inferior to some of the others. If he ever heard the word "moonlight" applied to it, he probably used some very nasty language.

The famous *Kreutzer Sonata*, for violin and piano, has also had its share of fictional treatment. It may fairly be considered the best of Beethoven's violin sonatas,

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but it is certainly not a sensuous piece of music. Tolstoy's novel, *The Kreutzer Sonata*, makes it the occasion for the insane jealousy of a husband, ending in the actual murder of his wife. It seems that Mrs. Posdnicheff played piano nicely, and used her talent to accompany a red-lipped violinist named Troukhatchevsky. It was the *Kreutzer Sonata* that convinced Mr. Posdnicheff that they were doing him wrong.

Actually this sonata was written for a mulatto violinist from England named Bridgetower. (Beethoven pronounced his name "Britchdower.") It was introduced at a concert in May, 1803, with Bridgetower reading the slow movement at sight, as Beethoven had just finished writing the variations. (The melody is a beauty, but the variations are mostly commonplace.) The Finale was lifted from an earlier sonata in A, after the composer had decided that it would be better to concentrate on producing one good composition.

Later Beethoven quarreled with Bridgetower "over a girl," and rededicated the sonata to Rudolph Kreutzer, another violinist. Kreutzer called it "outrageously unintelligible," and refused to play it.<sup>1</sup>

Beethoven's great *Violin Concerto*, opus 61, also had its first public performance at sight, the soloist in this case being the first violinist and conductor of the Theater "an der Wien," Franz Clement, and the date December

<sup>1</sup> When Albert Spalding ventured to criticize the variations in the presence of a local benefactress of music, she said sweetly, "Why not play the slow movement *without* the variations?"

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23, 1806. It seems strange that a composer should be willing to entrust so important a work to such a hap-hazard introduction, but it may be that these concerts were not taken very seriously. Certainly there is evidence that Beethoven revised this concerto considerably after Clement's performance. The main theme of the Finale, incidentally, is said to be a Russian folk-tune.<sup>1</sup>

### LEGITIMATE TITLES

Some of the titles applied to works of Beethoven are entirely legitimate, either created or approved by the composer himself. His popular sonata in C minor, opus 13, was labeled by him *Grande Sonate Pathétique*, and it fully lives up to this name. The dedication was to his patron, Prince Lichnowsky, perhaps as a slight apology for having referred to another nobleman, Count Browne, as "his first Maecenas." The Rondo of this sonata was originally intended for one of Beethoven's Trios.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Beethoven dedicated his violin concerto to Clement, and the original manuscript, preserved in the imperial library at Vienna, bears this curious Franco-Italian inscription, in the composer's handwriting: "Concerto par Clemenza pour Clement, primo violino e Direttore al Theatro à Vienne dal L.v. Bthvn., 1806." To the horrors of the classical concert world, add the fact that on the same program with Beethoven's new concerto Clement played a set of variations with the violin held upside down.

<sup>2</sup> It has been pointed out that the opening notes of Beethoven's *Sonata Pathétique* may have suggested the start of Tschaikowsky's symphony of the same name, many years later. The basic tones are the same, with only a rhythmic difference.

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The composer could not have objected to the title of *Appassionata*, given by Cranz of Hamburg to his sonata in F minor, opus 57, for it is entirely appropriate. It was dedicated to Count Brunswick (Braunschweig). Cranz also supplied the name of *Pastorale* for the sonata in D, opus 28. The *Waldstein Sonata* (in C, opus 53) got its name from Count Ferdinand Ernst Gabriel, youngest son of Emmanuel Philipp, Graf Waldstein und Wartemberg von Dux. This friend and patron of Beethoven first met the composer while spending a year at the court of the Elector at Bonn, 1787–1788, when Beethoven was a mere boy. Three or four years later, Beethoven wrote a set of twelve variations for the piano (four-handed) on a melody supplied by the Count, and in 1805 he dedicated to him the great sonata ever since known as the *Waldstein*.

This sonata originally had for its slow movement the piece later known as *Andante Favori*, and published independently as opus 170. Some of his friends told him it was too long to be part of a sonata, so Beethoven substituted the Adagio as it is known today.

It was this same *Andante Favori* that created trouble between Beethoven and two of his best friends, Ferdinand Ries and Prince Lichnowsky. Beethoven had played the composition privately for Ries, who in turn played it for the Prince. Lichnowsky, an excellent musician, decided to have some fun with Beethoven, and a few days later performed the music for him as his own. The composer was furious, and Ries writes in his memoirs

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that "from that time on, Beethoven never again played for me."

Prince Lobkowitz, another good friend, also felt the displeasure of Beethoven. At a rehearsal of *Fidelio* (then called *Leonore*) the third bassoon player was absent, and Lobkowitz tried to soothe the indignant composer by remarking that with the first and second bassoons present they might get along without the third. On his way home after the rehearsal, Beethoven suddenly lost his temper, rushed up to the gate of the Prince's palace, and shouted at the top of his voice "*Lobkowitzscher Esel!*" ("Ass of a Lobkowitz!")<sup>1</sup>

He applied far stronger language to the first violinist of Lichnowsky's string quartet, Ignaz Schuppanzigh, but in this case his insults were meant to be a joke. Schuppanzigh was inclined toward stoutness, and Beethoven never let him forget this overweight, calling him "My Lord Falstaff" and often referring to him as "Der Dicke" ("The Fat One"). On the blank page at the end of his *Pastorale* sonata for piano, Beethoven wrote one of those musical burlesques that were characteristic of his rough humor, and it seems worth reproducing

<sup>1</sup> This Lobkowitz was Josef Franz Maximilian, son of the prince who had been Gluck's patron, both of them splendid musicians. In spite of his rudeness, Beethoven obviously held him in high esteem, dedicating to him the six string quartets of opus 18, the *Eroica* symphony, as well as the fifth and sixth (in whose dedication Prince Rasoumowsky was included), the string quartet in E-flat, opus 74, and the *Liederkreis*, opus 98. Beethoven's affection for Lobkowitz, two years his junior, was shown by the absurd nickname, "Prince Fitzli Putzli."

# Ludwig van Beethoven

## Lob auf den Dicken

("Tribute to Fatty")

Schup - pan - zigh ist ein Lump, Lump, Lump, Wer  
Schup - pan - zigh is a bum, bum, bum, Who

kennt ihn, wer kennt ihn nicht? Den dick - en Sau - ma-gen, den  
knows him, who knows him not? The fat one, old sow-bell - ly,

auf - ge-blas - nen E - sels - kopf, O Lump Schup-pan-zigh, O  
blown up gas - bag, ass - 's head, That bum Schup-pan-zigh, That

E - sel Schup-pan-zigh, Wir stim-men al - le ein, Du bist der  
don-key Schup-pan-zigh, We sing and all a - gree, You are the

gröss-te E - sell! O Lump! O E - sel! O E - sel! Hi - hi - hal  
big - gest don - key! You bum! You don - key! You don - key! Hee - hee - haw!

From Beethoven's Sketch-Books

Andante 5<sup>th</sup> Symphony

Final Form

Emperor Concerto

1.

2.

3.

Final Form

4.

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here, as it is seldom seen in print. Schuppanzigh has been dead so many years that he probably wouldn't mind.<sup>1</sup>

### BEETHOVEN CALLS IT SPINACH

Beethoven's *Trio* for clarinet, cello, and piano, opus 11, dedicated to the mother of Princess Lichnowsky, has a Finale whose main theme is borrowed from an aria in Joseph Weigl's opera, *L'Amor Marinaro*. This melody figured in one of the more picturesque battles of Beethoven's early career. A now forgotten musician named Daniel Steibelt, immensely popular in his day, had the temerity to come to Vienna and challenge Beethoven to a contest in improvisation, after insulting the composer in every way possible. Steibelt introduced a new *Quintet* of his own at a party, and then improvised on the theme which Beethoven owed to Weigl. With all the furious abandonment of an eighteenth-century Popeye the Sailor, Beethoven strode to the piano, picked up the cello part of Steibelt's *Quintet*, placed it upside down on the rack, thus getting a grotesque theme, and then improvised until his challenger left the room in disorderly retreat. But after that Beethoven never cared for the Finale of his clarinet *Trio*.

Ferdinand Ries tells how the Finale of Beethoven's *Sonata Appassionata*, was composed. They were taking a walk together, when the composer suddenly began to hum, roar, and make other strange noises, but never actually singing. He finally explained, "I have just

<sup>1</sup> The original arrangement is for alternating solo and choral voices.

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thought of a theme for the last Allegro of my sonata.'" Arriving at his home, he rushed to the clavier and played for an hour or more, completely forgetting Ries, who was to have had a lesson. When he eventually became aware of his pupil's presence, he said shortly, "I can give you no lesson today. I must go on with this." It was worth going on with.<sup>1</sup>

Several of the Beethoven symphonies have authentic stories associated with them, in addition to the one already told about the Mälzel Metronome. The most important, perhaps, concerns the *Eroica*, number three in a series of nine. It is now established that the idea was first suggested by General Bernadotte, when he was in Vienna in 1798, with Napoleon definitely the hero. When the symphony was completed, five years later, it bore the title *Napoleon Bonaparte*. It was Ries who brought Beethoven the news that Napoleon had permitted himself to be crowned Emperor, and he describes the fury with which the composer tore off the title page and stamped upon it, shouting his denunciations of the hero who had turned out to be an ordinary mortal after all. Later the work was called simply *Sinfonia Eroica*, "to celebrate the memory of a great man," and it was published in 1806 with this inscription, in Italian. In spite of Beethoven's disillusionment, it remained his own favorite among the nine symphonies. Its opening theme is directly borrowed from the overture to Mozart's boyhood opera, *Bastien et Bastienne*, transposed from G to

<sup>1</sup> Some say that it was actually the sonata in F, opus 54, not the *Appassionata*.

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E-flat. The *Funeral March* was probably suggested by the death of General Abercromby at the Battle of Alexandria, March 21, 1801. The sketches for it were made that Spring. The main theme of the Finale had already been used by Beethoven in his *Prometheus* ballet, as well as in a set of *Contredances* for piano, and as the subject of the *Piano Variations*, opus 35.

Of the popular *Fifth Symphony*, in C minor, there is little to say except that Beethoven himself gave the clue to its program by stating of its opening four notes, "Thus Fate knocks on the door." The sixth, or *Pastoral*, composed about the same time, has a far more definite story. It was the most complete and important piece of "program music" written up to that time, and its inspiration came from real rural scenes.

An obscure composer, Justin Heinrich Knecht of Stuttgart, had written a "pastoral symphony" in 1784, and Beethoven must have been familiar with this, for his own program follows it almost word for word. Yet it was Beethoven's own love of the country that created this charming composition, and there are many statements from the composer to bear witness to this. "No one can love the country as I do. Woods, trees and rocks give back the echo that a man longs for. . . . My bad hearing does not trouble me here. In the country every tree seems to speak to me, saying 'Holy! Holy!'"

Walking through his beloved woods, he often referred to the birds to which he had listened while composing the *Pastoral Symphony*. (The music contains actual imi-

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tations of the nightingale, the cuckoo, and the quail.) He particularly asked if there were any warblers about, and, when one was pointed out to him, he said, "That is my composer, up there." Then he wrote down a bit of music, but evidently as a joke, for it had no real tune, and was certainly not a bird call.

The opening melody of the *Pastoral Symphony* may have been a folk-song, and there is the same possibility in the main theme of the Finale, which has often been used for the "Come hither" of Shakespeare's "Greenwood Tree" in *As You Like It*. Both tunes sound like folk-music, regardless of their origin.

### FEELINGS AND REALITIES

While Beethoven wrote out the detailed program of this symphony, he expressly stated that his music was to be interpreted "more as an expression of feeling than painting." But he has a definite place in mind (Hetzen-dorf) when he describes his opening theme as "Awakening of pleasant feelings on arriving in the country." The brook which he describes in the second movement is a real one which he often pointed out to his friends. The peasant song of the third movement is again close to actual folk-music, and the imitation of a storm has considerable dramatic realism. There is no doubting the biographical backgrounds to the *Pastoral Symphony*.

The cheerful seventh and eighth symphonies were written at a time when Beethoven had every reason to

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be more depressed than usual. His deafness was growing worse, and to add to his troubles he began to hear scandalous tales of how his younger brother Johann was carrying on with his landlord's daughter. He went to Linz in a rage, to have it out with these careless young people. As a result his brother promptly married the girl. It was just another example of consistent blundering, but the result, as always, took the form of great music.

Beethoven was planning his *Ninth Symphony*, in D minor, about the time that he was composing the seventh and eighth (1812). But he did not complete it till over a dozen years later. He had also planned to set to music Schiller's *Ode to Joy*, but the idea of introducing this into the Finale of the symphony did not occur to him until his mature powers brought him to the realization that even the symphonic form would eventually demand words for its completion. A pathetic story is told of the first performance of the *Ninth Symphony*. Beethoven did not conduct, being now absolutely deaf, but sat in the orchestra with a score and beat time throughout. His attempts to conduct without actually hearing the music had proved disastrous, and in this case he again lost track of the measures, and when the performance ended he was still beating time. One of the musicians turned him around so that he could *see* the audience applauding, and, with the realization of his tragic infirmity, the ovation became overwhelming.

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Beethoven's one attempt to write an opera had its own peculiar difficulties. He was a long time making up his mind about a libretto, and finally took the story of the faithful Leonora, suggested by Emanuel Schikaneder, who had been the librettist of Mozart's *Magic Flute*. The text was prepared by Joseph Sonnleithner from a play by Jean Nicolas Bouilly, *Leonore*.

Beethoven worked very hard over this opera, his sketch-books showing as many as eighteen different suggestions for the start of a single number. He wrote four different Overtures, the first being now known as *Leonore*, No. 2. The title of the opera was changed to *Fidelio* (against the composer's wishes) because there had already been two other operas called *Leonore*, by Gaveaux and Paër.

There are stories of how Beethoven tried the music on his friends, singing all the parts in a "detestable" voice. He also had some advice from Cherubini, who was highly regarded as an operatic composer. But the singers and instrumentalists butchered the music in rehearsal and openly rebelled against its difficulties. Only a few days before its first performance, November 20, 1805, Beethoven wrote, "All pp, cresc., all decresc., and all f, ff may as well be struck out of my music, since not one of them is regarded. I shall lose all desire to write anything more if my music is to be played thus. . . . The whole business of the opera is the most distressing in the world." To the players of the wind-instruments he applied unquotable language.

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A few days before the première of *Fidelio*, Napoleon captured Vienna. Most of the Austrian nobility fled, and the audience on the opening night was a small one, composed chiefly of French officers. After two more attempts, Beethoven admitted his failure and withdrew the opera.

A meeting was held at the home of Prince Lichnowsky and, after a terrific argument, lasting from seven in the evening till one in the morning, Beethoven was persuaded to cut out three numbers and to write a new Overture, now known as the matchless *Leonore*, No. 3. His friend Stephen Breuning revised the libretto, and later performances were increasingly successful. But it was not until 1814, when a final revision of the text had been made by Friedrich Treitschke, with the addition of the Overture now known as *Fidelio*, that the opera really made a hit.

So it becomes evident that Ludwig van Beethoven was far from the inspiration-worker that so many music lovers would like to make him. He labored constantly, with the "infinite capacity for taking pains" that has been called the true characteristic of genius. But things did not come to him easily, and his creative problems were magnified a hundredfold by physical handicaps and the bitterness of his constant quarrels.

The Beethoven sketch-books give an extraordinary insight into the actual methods of a great composer,<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See the examples given on p. 89, illustrating the gradual development of a theme in Beethoven's mind.

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and a few quotations will show clearly how his "inspirations" gradually arrived at their final form.

Beethoven made bad jokes; he said and did disgracefully rude and vulgar things. But out of the trials and torments of his body and soul he composed great music. There are lots of people living today whose jokes and manners are just as bad as Beethoven's, but they haven't his excuse for them.

## VIII

### *Weber and the Fields of Fantasy*



HE main trouble with the Freiherr Carl Maria von Weber was that he had a fool for a father. W. C. Fields could play the character perfectly—a pompous, conceited old ass, who thought he was a musician and felt elected to give his genius to an expectant world and pass it on to at least one of his children.

Franz Anton von Weber was in turn a soldier, a fiddler, a judge, a financial counselor (although himself an inveterate spendthrift), a roving actor and impresario, under an assumed name, and director of the town band. He had a habit of playing his violin even while taking a walk. The marriage of his niece, Constanze, to Mozart made him determined to produce a musical prodigy of his own, and he sent two of his sons, Friedrich and Edmund, to study with Haydn.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> They turned out quite well under this excellent instruction, but neither of them was in any sense a genius.

### *Carl Maria von Weber*

Disappointed in these hopes, and a widower of past fifty, he married a sixteen-year-old girl, Genoveva von Brenner, who became the mother of Carl Maria, a sickly child, with a hip disease which lamed him for life. Genoveva stood the hard Salzburg climate and the irregular life of the Weber family for twelve years, and then died before her son's ability had really expressed itself.

For a long time the boy showed no particular aptitude for music, but his life with the strolling players of his father's company gave him an early familiarity with stage technique, which later proved helpful to his operatic works. There was a brief interruption to the artistic life while father and son devoted themselves to the newly invented business of lithography, to which young Carl made some important contributions.

With all these handicaps and delays, the boy still managed to secure some good musical instruction (partly from Haydn's brother, Michael) and actually wrote an opera at fourteen, *The Dumb Girl of the Forest*. The libretto was by the Chevalier von Steinsberg, manager of the theatrical company at Freiburg. It was given two performances and made no impression whatever.

Another opera, *Peter Schmoll and his Neighbors*, privately produced in the home of Michael Haydn, and later publicly at Augsburg, seems to have met with the same apathy. Meanwhile Weber became the pupil of Abt Vogler, a much overrated composer and organist, who lives today in a rather dull poem by Robert Brown-

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ing. Vogler prejudiced him against Beethoven (which he lived down later), but seems otherwise to have been a fairly good influence. At least he gave Weber experience in letting him arrange his own opera, *Samori*, for piano, and the youngster showed his appreciation by writing a set of variations on one of its themes, all that is now remembered of the Vogler work.

Weber's life began unfortunately, and bad luck continued to pursue him. He lost his beautiful singing voice when he took a drink from a glass of nitric acid, under the impression that it was wine, a mistake that almost ended fatally. He got into bad company, spent money foolishly on an actress, and incurred the enmity of King Frederick of Württemberg, for whose brother he worked as a secretary. This royal displeasure actually resulted in Weber's imprisonment and eventual banishment from the kingdom, but it brought him to his senses and made him go to work in earnest.

With his garrulous father, now seventy-five and still a fool, Weber went to Mannheim and then Darmstadt, where he met, among others, a Jewish banker's son, Jakob Liebmann Beer, later to be known as the operatic composer, Giacomo Meyerbeer. It was about this time also that Weber first became interested in the story of the *Freischütz* (*Free Shooter*), which he found in a book of *Gespenster Geschichten* (*Ghost Stories*).

An attempt to produce a revised version of *The Dumb Girl of the Forest*, under the fancier title of *Sylvania*, met with little success, chiefly because on the opening

## *Carl Maria von Weber*

night the audience stayed away to watch Mme. Blanchard's balloon ascension. But the leading role was sung by a girl named Caroline Brandt, who eventually became the composer's wife.

Before this happy event, Weber had become involved with another actress, Therese Brunetti, who made him both miserable and ridiculous. He had met the poet Goethe, who treated him with inexcusable rudeness, talking loudly while he played; and his father had finally completed his meddling life. But Weber was writing music of all kinds. Two symphonies in C had been composed during a brief engagement at the ducal court in Carlsruhe, where he had a good orchestra to conduct. Now he was also writing songs, sonatas, and concertos of various kinds.

### **WEBER'S PATRIOTIC MUSIC**

The first real impression made on the public by Weber was through his setting to music the patriotic songs in Theodor Körner's collection, *Leier und Schwert* (*Lyre and Sword*). The *Schwertlied* and *Lützow's Wilde Jagd* (*Lützow's Wild Hunt*) became particularly popular in the immensely dramatic versions that he gave them, and they are still among his most effective compositions.

It was the battle of Waterloo that inspired his cantata *Kampf und Sieg* (*Strife and Victory*) and here again Weber's gift for expressing patriotism in music asserted itself.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> A direct comparison was made between Weber's work and the *Battle Symphony* of Beethoven, already discussed (p. 80). The comment of an army

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This work, after several more examples of bad luck, was indirectly responsible for the composer's appointment as conductor of German opera in Dresden, where he arrived at the age of thirty-one.

Now that luck seemed to have smiled upon him at last, Weber began to discover what professional jealousy meant (and still means) in the musical world. The struggle between Italian and German opera had become a desperate one, and Weber found the Italians lined up solidly against him, with a ringleader in the minor composer, Francesco Morlacchi, to whom he nevertheless showed the greatest kindness.

The "treasons, stratagems and spoils" of these men with music in their souls had no effect, however, and Weber won an enormous success with his opening performance, Méhul's *Joseph in Egypt*, proving himself a conductor as well as a composer of the first rank. Happily married, and a social favorite, he was now ready to enter seriously upon the creation of German opera.

In Dresden he found the librettist for his *Freischütz* in Friedrich Kind, who wrote the text in seven days. Weber worked far more slowly over the music, but by May of 1820 the opera was completed. Meanwhile he had passed through a severe illness, but had also written the eternally popular *Invitation to the Dance (Waltz)* dedicated to his wife.

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general to Weber, at Prague, where both pieces had been heard, was "With you I hear nations speaking; with Beethoven, only big boys playing with rattles."

*Carl Maria von Weber*

*Der Freischütz* was first called *The Hunter's Bride*, but regardless of its name it was a long time reaching production, with mounting intrigues against its composer. Weber's biographer and pupil, Sir Julius Benedict, gives the following description of him at this time: "The dire disease which but too soon was to carry him off had made its mark on his noble features; the projecting cheekbones, the general emaciation, told their tale; but in his clear blue eyes, too often concealed by spectacles, in his mighty forehead, fringed by a few straggling locks, in the sweet expression of his mouth, in the very tone of his weak but melodious voice, there was a magic power which attracted irresistibly all who approached him."

It was not Dresden but Berlin that finally saw the première of *Der Freischütz*, the production taking place on the anniversary of Waterloo, to open a new theater. A lot of the stage effects, such as the fireworks, went wrong, but it was a huge success in spite of all handicaps.

Weber, who conducted the rehearsals and the performance, was so unconcerned that he finished his great *Konzertstück in F minor* on the morning of the big day. Benedict describes his playing of it and the outline of its program: "The lady sits in her tower; she gazes sadly into the distance. Her knight has been for years in the Holy Land; shall she ever see him again? Battles have been fought; but no news of him who is so dear to her. In vain have been all her prayers. A fearful vision rises to her mind; her knight is lying on the battlefield,

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deserted and alone; his heart's blood is ebbing fast away. Could she but be by his side! Could she but die with him! She falls exhausted and senseless. But hark! What is that distant sound? What glimmers in the sunlight from the wood? What are those forms approaching? Knights and squires with the cross of the Crusaders, banners waving, acclamations of the people; and there! It is he! She sinks into his arms. Love is triumphant. Happiness without end. The very woods and waves sing the song of love; a thousand voices proclaim its victory."<sup>1</sup>

Weber gave a concert for his own benefit before leaving Berlin, introducing the *Konzertstück* and a set of variations on a Norwegian theme for the violin, in which he accompanied a rather eccentric violinist, Alexandre Boucher. The soloist had asked permission to insert a cadenza of his own in the Finale, and began to improvise on themes from *Freischütz*, but wandered so far from home that he was unable to get back again. He put down his violin, threw his arms around Weber, and cried out, "*Ab, grand maître, que je t'aime, que je t'admire!*," while the audience cheered.

*Euryanthe* was written for Vienna, to a very bad libretto by a fat lady named Helmina von Chezy. There is a story that she turned up at the opening performance without her ticket and caused a great commotion before arriving at her seat, à la Bea Lillie, crying out, "I am the poetess! I am the poetess!" The libretto was made

<sup>1</sup> According to Benedict, "He was certainly one of the greatest pianists who ever lived."

## *Carl Maria von Weber*

even worse later by the revisions of Conradiin Kreutzer, and *Euryanthe* proved a flat failure.

Weber finally gave up his life for the sake of his wife and children. He was invited to come to London with a new opera, to be conducted by himself, and guaranteed a return of at least \$5,000. His doctor told him that a year's rest in Italy might prolong his life for five or six years, but that acceptance of the English commission would mean death in a few months. Weber said, "As God wills," and went to England, as he himself said, "to die."

The opera was *Oberon* (to a libretto by Planché) and before he composed the music he learned to read, write, and speak the English language with surprising fluency. Success once more rewarded him, and for a brief period Weber was the hero of London. But the doctor was right. Less than three months after his arrival in England, on June 4, 1826, Carl Maria von Weber died of a complication of diseases, chiefly tubercular. Another composer dead at forty, and another sacrifice to the malevolent forces of greed and jealousy that have crushed so many of the fine flowers of genius!

## IX

### *Franz Schubert Gets His Music Paper*



N a certain morning in the year 1808, an orchestral rehearsal is taking place at the Imperial Convict in Vienna. Don't be deceived by the name of Convict. It means the excellent school at which choirboys are trained for the Royal Chapel, headed by the veteran Salieri. The coach of the student orchestra is old Ruzicka, teacher of harmony, a solid musician of the traditional type, and a stern taskmaster. He is facing a mixed group of youngsters, all very much in earnest, armed with a variety of instruments. Up front, at the head of the first violins, is big Joe Spaun, a natural leader among the boys.

They are playing, at sight, a symphonic movement by Haydn, and, as the music rises rather unsteadily, Spaun becomes aware of an unusually good violinist behind him. Whoever he is, this boy has more accuracy, more

*Franz Schubert*

tonal beauty, and more instinctive musicianship than any of the others.

At the end of the movement, Spaun turns around and sees, to his astonishment, an owl-faced little fellow in ill-fitting clothes, wearing spectacles that are almost as large as his face.

"You're a new boy, aren't you?" barks Spaun.  
"What's your name?"

"Franz Peter Schubert," is the timid answer.

"Not a bad fiddler for your size," comments the bigger boy, with kindly patronage. "I think you'll make the regular orchestra."

"Oh, thank you," gasps the little Schubert, with a quick smile of appreciation. "I love to play."

It is not long before little Franz himself becomes the leader of the first violins. Spaun, delighted with his success, takes a personal and unselfish interest in the talented boy. "You are so musical," he remarks one day, "Why don't you try composing something?"

"Oh, I have already composed some pieces in my head. But I have no music paper to write them down. I get so many ideas. Some of them are not very good, I'm afraid."

"Write them down anyway. Music paper is not hard to get. I'll have some for you today. Let me know when you need more."

Thus the abrupt, businesslike Spaun settles one of the most important problems in the history of music. Franz Schubert has his much needed supply of manuscript

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paper, and a great creative genius, the most natural and prolific of them all, goes to work in earnest.

It is only a few years later that Spaun, now a firm friend and fervent admirer of the precocious young Schubert, drops in to see him at his father's house in the Himmelpfortgrund (Place of the Heavenly Gate). Franz is now a mature boy of eighteen, and has already composed a number of excellent pieces, including a truly great song, *Gretchen am Spinnrade* (*Marguerite at the Spinning Wheel*). He has left the Convict to help his father in the arduous work of teaching school, but still devotes every spare moment to music.

### BIRTH OF THE ERLKING

On this particular afternoon of the winter of 1815, Spaun knocks rather diffidently at the Schubert door (a "Heavenly Gate" in truth), for he knows he is likely to find the gifted boy in the throes of composition. There is no answer to his knock, but music is unquestionably in the air—strange, wild, galloping sounds from the piano, and occasional shouting of undistinguishable words.

Spaun pushes the door open and peeps in timidly. He is no longer the leader, but the devoted follower, in this rare friendship. Schubert scarcely notices him. He is working like one possessed, literally throwing notes on paper, then rushing to the piano to play a few chords or sing a line, and back again with even greater ferocity to his nearly completed manuscript.

*Franz Schubert*

"Just a few minutes," he begs. "It is almost finished. Such a marvelous poem by Goethe, *The Erlking!* Dramatic! Tragic! It creates its own music. I can hardly keep up with it!"

Spaun waits in silence while the final notes go down on paper. Then Schubert plays him the new song, half talking, half singing the words. *Der Erlkönig* is born!

"You must bring it to the Convict tonight," cries Spaun. "Holzapfel can sing it. The old crowd will all be there, and Papa Ruzicka too. They must hear it. I think it is good, but I confess it baffles me at first hearing."

"I know that the words are great," answers Schubert simply, "and I have written the music as I feel it. Now I must find something else to compose."

But he turns up that evening at the old school, to be greeted enthusiastically by his familiar companions. There is music of all kinds, with jokes and laughter. It is like an alumni gathering, and the stern hand of discipline has vanished.

Finally Spaun calls them to order. "Franzl has a new song," he proclaims, "a setting of Goethe's *Erlkönig*. I want you to hear it. Holzapfel has a good ear. He can sing it after Franzl plays it through once."

Obediently Schubert sits down at the piano. His fingers pound out the galloping octaves with confidence, but his voice is shy and unemotional as he delivers the dramatic lines of the father, the Erlking, and the dying child. His listeners are interested but puzzled.

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"Let's hear it again," says someone. "Let Holzapfel try it." The fine young tenor of the group, who has been reading over Franz's shoulder, clears his throat ceremoniously. "It is a difficult song," he announces apologetically, "but it makes me want to sing it. I'll do my best."

His best is excellent for a first performance, but still the hearers are doubtful. This is no place for hypocritical compliments! They take their music seriously, and they expect great things from their former fellow-student.

"I never heard a horse gallop that way, in triplets," ventures one voice.

"It is a suggestion, not an imitation," answers Schubert briefly.

"And how can one voice represent three different characters and a narrator besides?"

"That makes it worth while for the singer. He must change his quality, and make each utterance distinctive, but without a trace of burlesque. It is not easy."

The prize pupil of the harmony class makes the most important objection. "My dear Franz," he expostulates, "you have one spot where the child is singing a G-flat against F and E-flat in the accompaniment. That is against all the rules—a horrible discord. What is your opinion, Professor Ruzicka?"

The old man has made no comment as yet, and he ponders a moment before answering. Finally he says slowly, "It has never been done before. The rules are all

## Franz Schubert

against it. But if Franzl does it, it must be right. His ideas come direct from Heaven. From now on, this must be considered correct and effective harmony."

Old Ruzicka has prophesied better than he realizes, but it is still a long way to modernism. As for Schubert, he is not concerned with praise or criticism. He is already thinking of his next song, blissfully unaware that *The Erlking* is destined for immortality as one of the greatest of all time.

Four years later he accompanies his new friend Vogl, a great concert tenor, to the singer's native town of Steyr. There he meets another circle of friends, all willing satellites to the now blazing star of Schubert's genius. Every evening there is informal music, and when the *Erlking* is demanded, they try a novel experiment. Schubert divides the parts, giving Vogl the narrator and the father, singing the Erlking himself, and entrusting the child to the vivacious Pepi Koller.

"The boys from the Convict should be here," he says at the close. "They wanted it this way. Perhaps I can improve it still further." And without warning he takes out a comb, covers it with paper, and parodies his own masterpiece in the absurd tones of a kazoo!

Schubert could afford to laugh at himself. But he was far from pleased when his fanatical admirer, Anselm Hüttenbrenner, brought out a set of *Erlking Waltzes*. Poor Anselm! He meant well, and Schubert certainly needed both money and publicity by that time. The

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waltzes are happily forgotten, but *The Erlking* itself will never die.<sup>1</sup>

### OTHER SCHUBERTIANA

Franz Schubert is the one composer who actually lived up to the popular idea of creative inspiration. He spent little time in laborious toil. Music leaped spontaneously from his heart, brain, and fingers, and his chief problem was to write it down fast enough. Schumann said of Schubert, "He could have set a placard to music."

The story of how Schubert composed *Hark, Hark, the Lark* is familiar. He was walking past an outdoor restaurant in the village of Währing when he saw some of his friends at one of the tables. Schubert joined them, and picked up a volume of Shakespeare which was lying on the table.

Glancing idly through the pages of *Cymbeline*, his eye caught the lines of *Hark, Hark, the Lark*. Immediately he was enraptured. "Such a lovely melody has come into my head," he cried. "If I only had some music paper!"

Hastily his friends drew lines across the back of the bill of fare. Schubert jotted down the notes as fast as he could, and another immortal song was born. He took the volume home with him, and composed the music of

<sup>1</sup> The name *Erlkönig*, or *Erlking*, literally means "King of the Alders," and represents a spectral character that pursues the father and his sick child through the forest, first trying to entice the boy away, and finally threatening violence. When the father arrives at the inn, with galloping hoofbeats gradually slowing down, the boy is dead in his arms.

## Franz Schubert

*Who is Sylvia?* the same evening—still another masterpiece!

In May of the year 1823, Franz Schubert happened to call on his friend Randhartinger. (There were always new friends for this companionable young man!) While waiting, Schubert glanced through a volume of Wilhelm Müller's poems. When he left the house a bit later, the book went with him, and when Randhartinger came the next morning to claim his property, a large part of the *Schöne Müllerin* cycle had already been put on paper.

Schubert's most popular song is probably the *Serenade*, which has been sung and played in every possible form. Whether it had a feminine inspiration has never been decided.

It has generally been assumed that Schubert cherished a hopeless love for the Countess Caroline Esterhazy, who was for a time his pupil. There is a story that when she jokingly accused him of never dedicating anything to her, he said "Why should I? Everything I ever did is dedicated to you." Actually he did inscribe his *Fantasia in F minor* to her, but it was not published until after his death.

The German musical comedy, *Das Dreimädlerhaus* (*The House of the Three Girls*) which formed the basis of the Romberg operetta, *Blossom Time*, makes an elaborate love story out of this slender foundation of fact. The heroine, in the American version, is the first of three sisters, Mitzi, Kitzi, and Fritzi, daughters of the court jeweler, Kranz. Schubert falls in love with Mitzi, but

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being too timid to declare himself, allows his friend Baron Schober to sing his *Serenade* to her. The result is that they fall in love with each other, and Schubert resigns her to the man who actually befriended him, according to history.

The *Song of Love*, in *Blossom Time*, is of course the second theme of the first movement of Schubert's *Unfinished Symphony*, plus a snatch from one of his waltzes. The operetta reaches a climax in the vision which brings to Schubert the strains of his famous *Ave Maria*.

The fact is that Schubert wrote this popular song (perhaps best known in the violin transcription of Wilhelmj) along with several others from Sir Walter Scott's *Lady of the Lake* either just before or during a tour of the Steyr district with Vogl. There were seven altogether, forming the chief part of their program on this excursion. The *Ave Maria* is not in any sense an ecclesiastical piece, the words being taken from Ellen's prayer for protection when spending the night in a lonely cave.

Schubert writes about this and its companion songs: "My new songs from Walter Scott's *Lady of the Lake* have been very successful. People were greatly astonished at the devotion which I have thrown into the *Hymn to the Blessed Virgin*, and it seems to have seized and impressed everybody. I think that the reason of this is that I never force myself into devotion, or compose hymns or prayers unless I am really overpowered by the feeling; that alone is real, true devotion."

## Franz Schubert

At Salzburg the reception given to these songs brought further comment from their composer: "We produced our seven pieces before a select circle, and all were much impressed, especially by the *Ave Maria*, which I mentioned in my former letter. The way in which Vogl sings and I accompany, so that for the moment we seem to be one, is something quite new and unexpected to these good people."<sup>1</sup>

Hiller's account of this musical partnership is worth quoting also: "Schubert had little technique, and Vogl but little voice; but they had both so much life and feeling, and went so thoroughly into the thing, that it would be impossible to render these wonderful compositions more clearly and more splendidly. Voice and piano became as nothing; the music seemed to want no material help, but the melodies appealed to the ear as a vision does to the eye."

### SCHUBERT'S GREATEST SYMPHONIES

It is quite certain that Schubert never heard his two greatest symphonies, the so-called *Unfinished*, in B minor, and the one in C major, variously numbered seven, eight, and ten. (The last number seems logical, as it has now been proved that he wrote ten symphonies altogether, and that in C major was unquestionably the last of the series.)

Just why the B-minor symphony was left unfinished has never been decided. Some say that it was because

<sup>1</sup> These letters were to his brother Ferdinand.

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Schubert himself realized that he could never live up to the standards set by the first two movements. He left thematic sketches for a Scherzo movement, but they fall below the level of the inspirations already carried out. Attempts have been made to complete the work, with the help of these unsatisfactory hints, but these naïve effronteries have naturally failed.

It was Anselm Hüttenbrenner who acquired the manuscript of the *Unfinished Symphony*, after the death of its composer, along with a mass of other material. He had introduced Schubert to Beethoven, during the latter's last illness, and there is a tradition that Beethoven said to them, "You, Anselm, have my mind, but Franz has my soul." When Beethoven was on his death-bed, Schubert was one of the few people he asked to see, and, when Schubert himself was dying a year later, he said, in his delirium, "Beethoven is not here."

In 1860, thirty-two years after Schubert's death, Anselm's brother Joseph wrote a letter to Johann Herbeck, conductor of the concerts of Vienna's *Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde* (Society of the Friends of Music). He asked for some consideration of his brother's compositions, and added that Anselm had "a treasure in Schubert's B minor symphony, which we put on a level with the great symphony in C, his instrumental swan song, and any one of the symphonies by Beethoven."

Five years later Herbeck was visiting Graz, the city for whose musical society Schubert had originally begun the symphony. Anselm Hüttenbrenner was still

## *Franz Schubert*

living, in a little cottage at Ober-Andritz. There Herbeck found him, and the old man was easily persuaded to show him some of his manuscripts. When Herbeck mentioned the possibility of presenting something of Schubert's, Hüttenbrenner said "Oh, I have still a lot of things by Schubert," and brought a pile of papers out of an old chest. Herbeck's keen eye caught the title, *Symphony in B minor*, and he said casually, "This will do. Will you let me have it copied immediately at my expense?" "There is no hurry," answered old Anselm. "Take it with you." The *Unfinished Symphony* had its first performance at a *Gesellschaft* concert in Vienna, December 17, 1865.

While Robert Schumann is credited with the discovery of the symphony in C, "of heavenly length," it seems to have been performed during Schubert's lifetime, although he himself did not hear it. It was definitely composed in the last year of his life, 1828, and given to the *Musikverein* of Vienna for performance. But the orchestra found it too long and too difficult, and an earlier symphony in C, no. 6, was substituted. It seems, however, to have been performed by the Society of the Friends of Music in 1828 and again in 1829. Then it dropped out of sight completely, and was rediscovered only when Schumann visited Vienna in 1839. He found it buried under a mass of manuscripts in the possession of Schubert's brother Ferdinand. Mendelssohn gave it its first performance at the Leipzig *Gewandhaus*, March 21, 1839.

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It is astonishing to think how much of his own music Schubert probably never heard at all. He had the habit of putting a manuscript away in a drawer as soon as he had finished it, and starting immediately on something else. Once he failed to recognize a song of his own composition, and paid it a sincere compliment, forgetting that he had written it himself.

He sometimes wrote as many as six songs in a single day, and he sold some of these outright for 20 cents apiece. He never received an adequate return for his work, and seldom had even the satisfaction of knowing that the public appreciated his genius. His close friends were his favorite audience.

Schubert remains the ideal of those who prefer to think of art as a miracle, untrammeled by study or any other serious handicaps. But there was only one Franz Schubert, and he died in abject poverty at the age of thirty-one.

# X

## *The Schumann Love Story*



HEN Robert Alexander Schumann entered the University of Leipzig in the fall of 1828, he was a shy, introspective boy of eighteen. Uncertain whether he really wanted to study law, his mind wavered between music and literature, for he had already shown talent in both these directions.

His literary ideal was Jean Paul Friedrich Richter, familiarly known as "Jean Paul," whose fantastic, romantically exaggerated writings struck young Robert as just about perfect.<sup>1</sup> But he also played the piano quite well, so he decided that this gift, at least, he would develop as far as possible.

Thus it happened that Robert Schumann presented himself one day at the home of Professor Friedrich

<sup>1</sup> Schumann himself called the first of his *Papillons* "a translation of Jean Paul." He declared that the whole series was "inspired by the *Flegeljahr*; it is all there, down to the giant's foot in F-sharp minor."

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Wieck, one of the nastiest characters in all history, but nevertheless the best piano teacher in Leipzig, and possibly in Germany, at the time. Wieck's star pupil was his little daughter, Clara, aged nine, already a remarkable pianist and definitely headed toward a concert career.

The little girl was shyly interested in the University student, twice her age, who also played the piano so well, and when Robert became not only her father's pupil, but actually a boarder in the Wieck household, he grew more and more important in her eyes.

The story of Robert Schumann's music is the story of their mutual devotion, developing gradually from mere childhood, overcoming a series of the most exasperating obstacles, but resulting eventually in the perfect fusion of creative and interpretive art, represented by two great artists and human beings. It is one of the world's most absorbing love stories, filled with tragedy, yet with such climaxes of happiness as only two such rarely beautiful souls could have experienced.

For a time Robert Schumann seemed hardly aware of the little girl, who regarded him very much as a big brother. They played the piano together, and he showed her his early attempts at composition. Clara gave her first recital at the Gewandhaus, when only eleven years old, and Robert was honestly pleased with her success.

When she was fourteen, he kissed her for the first time, and years later she wrote about it as "an unforgettable experience." Robert himself expressed his feelings at the

## *Robert Schumann*

time, in a letter to a friend: "Think of perfection and I will agree to it." But it was three years before he kissed her again, and meanwhile many things happened.

Robert left Leipzig to go to Heidelberg, where he liked it much better. At the advice of his professor of law, Thibaut, he definitely decided on a musical career, and came back to Leipzig to study with Wieck, on the professor's assurance that in a few years he would make him one of the world's greatest pianists. He actually seemed on the way to such heights when one of his fingers became permanently disabled through an unfortunate invention of his own, designed to improve its efficiency by tying it up while the rest were working. This accident put an abrupt end to all concert aspirations, but luckily forced young Schumann to concentrate on composition.

### SCHUMANN AS A CRITIC

It also gave him the opportunity to express himself in words, and his literary gifts eventually concentrated themselves in a journal called *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*, which he began to publish in 1834, to continue for a period of ten years. This journal referred frequently to an imaginary society called the *Davidsbund*, "destined to slay all the Philistines, musical or otherwise."

Much of Schumann's musical comment was written in the form of dialogues between various *Davidsbündler*, whose fanciful names represented actual members of a

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youthful editorial group, banded together against mediocrity, routine, and the whole prosaic manner of life. They found musical expression later in the *Davidsbündlertänze*, composed by their editor-in-chief.

Schumann applied several names to himself, such as Raro, Jean-qui-rit, and particularly Florestan and Eusebius, the former representing the bolder, more vehement side of his character, with Eusebius as the romantic poet.<sup>1</sup>

Mendelssohn appears in this group as Felix Meritis; Julius Knorr, a musical and literary amateur, is recognized by his first name; Carl Banck, a composer and singing-teacher, has the title of Serpentin; Ludwig Schunke, a pianist, is usually Jonathan, although Schumann applies this name also to himself. Fritz Friedrich is probably the painter Lyser, who made a famous sketch of Beethoven wearing a high hat. Anton von Zuccalmaglio, a collector of folk-songs, has his unwieldy name turned into the more practical Gottschalk Wedel. Zilia seems to refer to Clara Wieck, who also appears more obviously as Chiara and Chiarina.

One of Schumann's first contributions to the *Zeitschrift* dealt with a young Pole named Chopin, who had just published a set of variations on Mozart's familiar *La ci darem la mano*, as his second opus. While Wieck was writing a scholarly but dull review of these variations for another journal, Schumann came straight to

<sup>1</sup> The originals of these characters were doubtless Vult and Walt, in Jean Paul's *Flegeljahr*.

the point with his historic line, "Hats off, gentlemen! A genius!"

A clever imitation of Chopin's melodic style appears in the Schumann *Carnaval*,<sup>1</sup> opus 9, written in 1834, identified by the name of his model. This popular set of piano pieces also contains a tribute to Paganini, an affectionate reference to Clara ("Chiarina"), musical expressions of both Florestan and Eusebius, and a final *March of the Davidsbündler against the Philistines*, in which these arch enemies were depicted by the *Grossvatertanz* (*Grandfather-Dance*). This was an old German tune of the seventeenth century, very popular at weddings,

*Grossvatertanz*

(*Grandfather-Dance*)

Und als der Gross - va - ter die Gross - mut - ter  
nahm, Da ward der Gross - va - ter ein Braeu - ti - gam.

<sup>1</sup> The name was spelled *Carnaval* in the original edition, and the composer's own German title was "*Fasching. Schwaenke auf vier Noten f. Pfte von Eusebius.*" The four notes, appearing most clearly in the section called *Lettres dansantes*, or *Sphinxes*, were A, S (German Es or E-flat), C, and H (German for B natural) and they spelled the name of a Bohemian town, Asch, besides appearing as the only musical letters in Schumann's own family name. The significance of the Bohemian town becomes apparent on the next page.

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where it was generally used as a *Good Night, Ladies*, to send the guests home. (Its reputation as a *Kehraus* or "clear out" number logically connects it with the retreat of the flying Philistines.) Since Schumann also used the *Grossvatertanz* in the Finale of his *Papillons* (which in many other ways suggests the later *Carnaval*) it may be worth quoting here.

### THE COURSE OF TRUE LOVE

The mysterious "Estrelle" of the *Carnaval* can be identified as Ernestine von Fricken, a good-looking Bohemian girl, daughter of a baron, who came to Leipzig to study with Wieck. It did not take her long to work up a romance with Robert, who still seemed unaware of his real feeling for Clara. The little prodigy of the piano, now fifteen years old, concealed her jealousy and youthful heartbreak when Ernestine and Robert suddenly announced that they were engaged to be married.

But when Ernestine went back home to Asch (the four-letter town of this romantic crossword puzzle), Robert became more and more doubtful. On New Year's Day of 1836 he kissed Clara for the second time in their lives and finally realized the truth. He wrote Ernestine a letter the same day, breaking off their engagement.<sup>1</sup>

Now the real troubles of the young lovers began. Papa Wieck flatly refused his consent to their marriage

<sup>1</sup> She shortly married the elderly Count Zedwitz, who obligingly died eight months later. Ernestine herself died in 1844, but not of a broken heart.

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or engagement, and packed Clara off to Dresden. Schumann, in his bewilderment, wrote the pathetic little *Warum* (*Why?*) which every piano student has since played. (There is a story that *Warum* was written on the back of a bill of fare, but this may be a mere continuance of the Schubert tradition.)

The answer to Schumann's "Why?" should have been obvious enough. Wieck had no intention of giving up a daughter that brought in such a tidy sum each year, besides increasing his own reputation as a teacher. If she married at all, it must be a nobleman of wealth, not a poor, inconspicuous composer and editor, who would never be heard of again.<sup>1</sup>

Robert and Clara were forbidden even to correspond, but managed to write each other occasional letters, and even met secretly. When the enraged Wieck discovered this, he threatened to kill Schumann, and he probably meant it. For a year and a quarter the lovers never saw nor heard from each other; but during this period of separation, Schumann composed and dedicated to Clara his piano sonata in F-sharp minor, a "unique cry of passion for his beloved."<sup>2</sup>

Meanwhile additional influences worked against the young composer. The well-named "Serpentin" of the *Davidsbund*, Carl Banck, engaged by Wieck as a singing-

<sup>1</sup> Schumann's greatest resentment seems to have been caused by Wieck's calling him "phlegmatic."

<sup>2</sup> The complete title of this great work, opus 11, was merely *Pianoforte Sonata. Dedicated to Clara by Florestan and Eusebius.*

## *Stories behind the World's Great Music*

teacher for Clara, began to make love to her, carrying on a stealthy campaign against his rival. Clara evidently gave in to the extent of a mild flirtation, which had the immediate effect of turning her father against Banck also. The singing-teacher fled to Rudolfstadt, and Schumann bitterly satirized the whole affair in a tasteless tirade, referring to Clara as "Ambrosia" and to Banck as "Herr de Knapp."

Musically the effects were far worthier, for Schumann composed what is often considered the best of his piano works, the great *Fantasia*, "throbbing with unsatisfied passion, and desperate appeals to his absent love."

More misunderstandings followed. Clara wrote to Ernestine von Fricken, wondering if she also were being jilted by the temperamental Robert. He gave her fresh cause for jealousy by deliberately seeking another love, that of the pretty young English pianiste, Anna Robena Laidlaw, to whom he dedicated his *Fantasiestücke* (*Fantasy Pieces*), writing to her that she would find in them "the whole of the Rosenthal<sup>1</sup> and its romantic associations."

But Robert's music and Clara's interpretation of it eventually cleared the air. She played his sonata at a concert in Leipzig, August 13, 1837, knowing that he would be in the audience. Later she wrote, "Did you not understand that I played it because I knew no other way of showing you a little of what was going

<sup>1</sup> A suburban resort near Leipzig.

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on within me? I could not do it in secret, so I did it in public. Do you think my heart was not trembling?"

Through a mutual friend she sent word to Schumann that she would like to have his letters again, which her father had forced her to return. In reply, Robert sent her an envelope inscribed on the outside "After long days of silence, hope, and despair, may these lines be received with the same love as of old. If it no longer exists, I beg that this letter be returned to me unopened."

Could any girl of not quite eighteen have resisted such an inscription? Clara read the letter: "Are you still true and firm? Unshakably as I believe in you, the strongest spirit eventually hesitates when one hears absolutely nothing of what one holds dearest in the world. And that is what you are to me. I have thought it all over a thousand times, and everything says to me 'It must come to pass, if we sincerely wish it and act accordingly.' Let me know by a simple 'Yes' if you are willing to hand your father a letter from me on your birthday.<sup>1</sup> He is well disposed toward me at present, and cannot object if you still plead for me. . . . Do not forget the 'Yes,' then. I must have this assurance first, before I can think of anything more. All that I say here comes from the depths of my soul, and I sign it with my name, Robert Schumann."

Clara answered the letter immediately and characteristically: "Do you ask for just a simple 'Yes'? Such

<sup>1</sup> September 13, exactly a month later.

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a little word, and yet so important! How could a heart so full of ineffable love as mine fail to utter this little word with all its soul? I do so, and my inmost heart whispers it to you forever. If I could only describe the sufferings of my heart, and all the tears that I have shed! No! Perhaps Fate intends that we shall soon speak to each other again, and then. . . . Your plan seems dangerous to me, but a loving heart cannot stop to think of danger. So, once again, I say 'Yes.' Can God intend to make my eighteenth birthday a day of sorrow? That would be too cruel. I too have felt for a long time that 'it must come to pass.' Nothing on earth shall turn me aside, and I intend to show my father that even a young heart is capable of constancy."

They met again,<sup>1</sup> with the help of her faithful maid, Nanny, and on her birthday Robert carried out their plan with a manly, straightforward letter to her father.

"It is no momentary excitement," he wrote, "it is not passion, it is nothing merely external that binds me to Clara by every fibre of my being. It is the deep conviction that rarely has there been a union in which all the conditions of life are so propitiously harmonious; it is this noble girl, so worthy of honor, who spreads happiness everywhere, and is a guarantee of our own. Trustingly I place my future in your hands."

<sup>1</sup> Clara's account of this meeting includes the words, "I could hardly control my emotion. The moon shone so beautifully upon your face. . . . I felt the greatest happiness that I had ever experienced. I found again what was dearest to me."

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But the uncompromising Wieck remained stubborn, and the lovers were again separated for eight dreary months. Clara even wrote Robert a letter, doubting whether he could "provide her with a life free from care," but this was obviously dictated by her father. More natural was Clara's resentment at having her concert tours ignored by the *Zeitschrift*, but Schumann argued that such journalistic notice might be construed as an attempt to flatter the paternal dog in the manger.

### CLEARING THE BRIDAL PATH

Love triumphed once more. Robert sent her the manuscript of his *Davidsbündlertänze*, written, as he put it, "with many a bridal thought." "They came into being," he added, "amid the most splendid exaltation that I can ever recall." The *Novelettes*, *Kinderscenen* (*Scenes from Childhood*) and *Kreisleriana*<sup>1</sup> followed, and Clara's playing of this music began to make Schumann a really popular composer.

They met again in Leipzig, in the merry month of May, 1838, and agreed that nothing could stand in the way of their marriage. They even considered making their home in Vienna, most famous of musical centers, and Robert went there to reconnoiter. But the gay city

<sup>1</sup> The *Album for the Young* and *Kinderscenen* include such universally known pieces as *The Happy Farmer* and *Träumerei*. The title of *Kreisleriana*, Schumann's opus 16, dedicated to Chopin, refers to the Kapellmeister Kreisler of E. T. A. Hoffmann's *Fantasiestücke in Callots Manier*, a book much admired by the composer.

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on the blue Danube did not impress him favorably, even though the trip produced some artistic results.

He found a pen at the grave of Beethoven, and determined to write a symphony with it. (It must have been someone else's pen, for the symphony came to nothing.) He also discovered, in a mass of almost forgotten manuscripts, the great C-major symphony of Schubert, wrote an enthusiastic article about it, and arranged for its performance and publication. His own compositions showing the Viennese influence were the *Humoreske*, *Arabeske*, and *Faschingschwank aus Wien*, into which he introduced the prohibited *Marseillaise*, in defiance of local censorship.<sup>1</sup>

Clara's mother had long been divorced from Wieck (and no wonder), and the aroused lovers now secured her consent to their wedding. The next step was a court appeal,<sup>2</sup> insisting upon legal removal of Wieck's objections. That insufferable old troublemaker responded by demanding a financially absurd contract and refusing to appear for the conferences specified by law.

He wrote his daughter a scurrilous letter, which she received just before an important concert, and publicly accused Schumann of being a drunkard, a charge which was solemnly investigated and duly dismissed by the

<sup>1</sup> A more familiar use of the same melody occurs in Schumann's popular song, *Die beiden Grenadiere* (*The Two Grenadiers*).

<sup>2</sup> When Clara signed this appeal, Robert wrote to her: "I would that I could place a crown upon your head, but I can only fall at your feet and gaze up at you with eyes full of gratitude. In you I venerate the highest that the world can offer."

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court. Realizing at last that he had nothing to fear, and elated by the support of his friends and the receipt of a doctor's degree from the University of Jena, "*honoris causa*," Schumann pressed forward eagerly and exultantly. In an incredibly short time his creative genius produced six books of great songs, which he presented in triumph to his bride-to-be.

On August 1, 1840, after six long years of miserable doubt and waiting, their marriage was sanctioned by a court decree, and on September 12, the day before Clara's twenty-first birthday, the wedding took place at the country church of the fittingly named Schönefeld, near Leipzig.

Was it a mere coincidence that the happy pair soon published musical settings of Rückert's *Liebesfrühling* (*Springtime of Love*) which they had composed together? Certainly there was ample inspiration for Schumann's *Spring Symphony*,<sup>1</sup> written early in 1841, for the great piano concerto in A minor, begun in the same year, and for the new *Lieder* that poured from his overflowing heart.

Soon after the birth of their first child,<sup>2</sup> old Wieck came whining for a reconciliation, and the Schumanns blissfully forgave and possibly even forgot his monstrous behavior.

<sup>1</sup> This fine symphony was composed in exactly one month, but Schumann did not use the pen from Beethoven's grave. That superstition and its immediate results had long been discarded.

<sup>2</sup> The Schumanns had eight children altogether, one of whom died in infancy.

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This apparently ideal marriage, however, was not without its flaws. Clara's eminence as a concert artist compelled her to keep up her tours, and when she was away from him Robert found it almost impossible to do any composing. He waited impatiently for her return the first time they were separated, and her presence immediately inspired the creation of several string quartets and the famous *Quintet* for piano and strings.

When Clara decided upon a tour of Russia, Robert went along, and it is probable that the Easter celebration in Moscow influenced his *Bilder aus Osten* (*Pictures from the East*). But to the general public he was still the husband of Clara Wieck rather than the significant composer that musicians had come to recognize and esteem. At a reception after one of his wife's concerts he was asked what instrument *he* played! It was not an entirely happy position for one so proud and so sensitive.

### THE TRAGIC FINALE APPROACHES

After the Russian tour, the Schumanns moved to Dresden, where they lived through the revolution which resulted in Wagner's banishment. Wagner had been a contributor to Schumann's *Zeitschrift*, but the two never became real friends. Schumann said Wagner talked too much, and Wagner complained because he never could get a word out of Schumann!

But Wagner gave Schumann the impulse to write an opera, and the result was *Genoveva*, unfortunately not a popular success, and remembered today chiefly by its

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Overture. Meanwhile Jenny Lind was singing the Schumann *Lieder*, and compelling recognition of their greatness.<sup>1</sup> Clara Schumann introduced his *Concerto in A minor* at a Gewandhaus concert in Leipzig, on New Year's Day, 1846 (he probably kissed her again), and this composition, begun in the first year of their married life, not only established his creative reputation once for all, but gave the final touch to her development as an interpreter, freeing her from the temptation to display virtuosity for its own sake and giving her and her listeners a new standard of cooperation between soloist and orchestra.

The final years of the Schumann marriage are clouded with tragedy. Even in his youth, the composer, high-strung and supersensitive, had often expressed doubts as to his own mental balance, and there had been periods of illness affecting his mind rather than his body. He suffered from hallucinations and heard mysterious voices, which he sometimes translated into inspired music but which more often merely tormented him.

Schumann's *Symphony in C major* was completed only after a long battle for the normal health which had unquestionably been undermined beyond all else by the vicious attacks of his father-in-law.<sup>2</sup> He was more than

<sup>1</sup> She gave a joint recital with Clara, which was both financially and artistically successful.

<sup>2</sup> This symphony is generally called his second, although it was actually no. 3 in the order of composition. The symphony in D minor, now known as no. 4, was written in the same year as the first, 1841, but originally called a *Symphonic Fantasia*, and later considerably revised, especially in its orchestration.

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ever dependent upon the love and sympathy of his adored Clara, and she did everything in her power to save him from the fate that they both foresaw all too clearly.

It seemed a stroke of good fortune when his friend Hiller recommended Schumann as his own successor at Düsseldorf, on the Rhine, where he could conduct a symphony orchestra and live the quiet, creative life that he had long desired. The immediate result of this move was the *Rhenish Symphony* (called no. 3, but actually Schumann's last), inspired by the beautiful river with its ancient castles, its luscious vineyards, and the great cathedral of Cologne watching over its placid course. It was a ceremony in the cathedral that suggested a fifth movement for this symphony, of distinctly religious atmosphere, with an impressive theme for trombones.

But Düsseldorf and the Rhine did not prove friendly for long. There was dissension in the orchestra and among the directors. Schumann's conducting was severely criticized, and his ultimate resignation practically forced upon him. He had to sit at home while a substitute conducted to greater applause than he himself could win.

Under this final strain, his mind suddenly collapsed. He rushed from his house one night and attempted suicide by leaping from a bridge into the Rhine. His life was saved by some fishermen, but there was now no place for him except the madhouse. He spent his last

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two years in the private asylum of Dr. Richarz, at Endenich, near Bonn.

Clara saw him only once more, and then he was at the point of death. He recognized her, and it was in her arms that he died, July 29, 1856, at the age of only forty-six. A great creative spirit was snuffed out in its prime, literally killed by a world whose petty hostilities it could not comprehend.

## XI

### *Chopin's Pianistic Romances*



THE name of François Frédéric Chopin is inevitably coupled with that of George Sand, *nom de plume* of Mme. Aurore Dudevant, novelist and experimentalist in masculine reactions. She was not good-looking nor particularly attractive in a feminine way. She was six years older than Chopin, smoked black cigars, wore male clothing at times, and her feelings toward him might be described as maternal, possibly even paternal.

Yet the Polish genius, who came to Paris when barely of age, seems to have been honestly in love with her. But then, he fell in love with almost any woman who paid attention to him, and perhaps with some who did not. It all came out in his music, mostly short pieces for the piano which lent themselves easily to romantic interpretations. No other composer has had so many fanciful stories attached to his works. Some of them are undoubtedly true.

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The best starting-point is perhaps the silliest of all, yet credible. Chopin is calling at the home of Mme. Dudevant, in the Place d'Orléans, Paris. Her little dog (a Pekinese, inevitably) is chasing itself around in circles, to the hearty laughter of the writer and her pet pianist (mentally, perhaps, in sympathy with the *petit chien*).

A sudden thought strikes the literary lady. "François," she cries, after a whimsical puff at her cigar, "you must write a waltz about my little dog chasing its tail."

Obedient as always to feminine caprice, Chopin sits down at the piano, imitates the whirling motion in a four-note figure, and concocts the *Valse in D-flat*, later published as opus 64, no. 1, and still called the "waltz of the little dog."<sup>1</sup>

It is not generally known that Chopin also wrote a "cat waltz." It is the *Valse brillante*, opus 34, no. 3, in F major, whose opening measures are said to have been suggested by the noise that resulted when Chopin's cat jumped upon the keyboard. The rest of it is in the nature of a perpetual motion, so there may be some truth in the story.

Contrast with the aggressive, possessive, masculine personality of George Sand the sensitive, almost feminine

<sup>1</sup> It is also known as the *Minute Waltz* because supposedly it can be played in exactly one minute. Few pianists actually accomplish this, although Tausig, Rosenthal, and Godowsky have all played it in double notes, to make it twice as hard. The middle section of the melody was borrowed for the fox-trot *Castle of Dreams* in the musical comedy *Irene* some years ago.

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character and appearance of the composer, as he is described by his contemporaries. The pianist Moscheles said that he "looked like his music." Berlioz, although inclined to be sarcastic over Chopin's morbidity ("*Il se mourrait tout sa vie*"), said to a friend, "he is something you have never seen,—and someone you will never forget."

The best of Chopin's biographers, Frederick Niecks, describes him thus: "He was of slim frame, middle height; fragile but wonderfully flexible limbs, delicately formed hands, very small feet, an oval, softly outlined head, a pale, transparent complexion, long silken hair of a light chestnut color, parted on one side, tender brown eyes,<sup>1</sup> intelligent rather than dreamy, a finely curved aquiline nose, a sweet, subtle smile, graceful and varied gestures."

Chopin was the ideal romantic character, with the added touch of bad health (tuberculosis, as it developed), and the women raved about him in the 1830's and 1840's just as they would today. Fundamentally, however, his passion for Mme. Dudevant-Sand was a tragic affair.

### THE CONSTANT LOVER

He had been in love many times before they met, in 1837, at her country place in Nohant. His first attachment of importance was for a singing-pupil at the Warsaw Conservatory, Constantia Gladkowska, but she

<sup>1</sup> Liszt called them blue, but he was evidently wrong.

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married another. Chopin's sister Isabelle was rather bitter about this, and wrote, "It is easy to see that a fine chateau was a greater attraction. She had feeling only in her singing!" But the heartless Constantia inspired such music as the slow movement of Chopin's *Piano Concerto in F minor*, the *Valse in D-flat*, opus 70, no. 3 (published after his death), and other pieces.

Then came the Countess Delphine Potočka, but his feelings toward her were too Platonic to suit her. She may have influenced some of his waltzes and *Etudes*.

Next in line was Marie Wodzinska, sister of two of Chopin's boyhood playmates, Felix and Casimir Wodzinski. They all called him Fritz, and he had a regular place at their table, known as "Fritz's little corner." Marie was sorry that his name was not Chopinski, so that people would know he was Polish and not French. But Marie did not realize their mutual feelings until they met again in Dresden, long after their childhood acquaintance. At parting she gave him a flower, and he improvised a waltz for her. The clock on the Frauenkirche was striking ten. The noise of wheels could be heard on the pavement outside. It is all in the music of the waltz, now known as *La Valse de l'Adieu*, opus 69, no. 1, marked "Dresden, September, 1835, pour Mlle. Marie."

Chopin gave Marie the manuscript of this waltz, and she wrote to him in a sisterly spirit: "All of us found pleasure in it,—they in listening and I in playing, because it reminded us of the brother who had just left us."

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I took it to be bound; the German's eyes popped when he saw the first page."

Marie Wodzinska was actually engaged to Chopin for a time, but she was a practical girl and eventually gave up the thought of marrying the composer, although her mother approved of the match. In a frenzy of disillusionment, Chopin wrote the great *Ballade in G minor*, opus 23, which Schumann called "one of the bitterest and most personal of his works." After Chopin's death, all of Marie's letters were found in an envelope with the Dresden flower, tied by a ribbon and marked "Moia Biéda" ("My Pain").

Unquestionably many of Chopin's compositions were directly inspired or affected by the people and events around him. On his way to Paris for the first time he stopped at Stuttgart, and there heard the news that Warsaw had been taken by the Russians. In a burst of despairing patriotism he wrote the piano study in C minor, opus 10, no. 12, ever since known as the *Revolutionary Etude*, and dedicated to Franz Liszt.

Unquestionably also some of his finest music was written after he had met and succumbed to George Sand. They went to the island of Majorca together for his health, taking along her two children, Maurice and Solange. This trip did not turn out so well, although the start was auspicious.

They sailed on the *Malloquin*, on a lovely night, with no one awake but Aurore and François and the boatman at the helm. The boatman's song is said to appear in the

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beautiful middle melody of the *Nocturne in G major*, opus 37, no. 2, with the rippling water represented by the shimmering harmonies over a barcarolle accompaniment at the start and finish.<sup>1</sup>

Chopin had raised some funds by promising his *Preludes* to the French publisher, Camille Pleyel, who advanced him 500 francs, with 1,500 more to be paid on delivery of the manuscript. But they were soon in financial difficulties, even though they had found cheap living quarters in the old monastery of Valdemoso. The peasants in general were unfriendly, and overcharged them for food and other necessities.

George Sand tells one story of Valdemoso that may be true, although she has a tendency to let her imagination run wild on the whole Chopin affair. It seems that she and her son had gone to Palma, and were caught in a terrible storm on the way back. They were deserted by their driver, and finally arrived at a late hour, barefooted, wet to the skin, and completely exhausted. Chopin greeted them with the words, "Ah! I knew well that you were dead!"

He had been composing a *Prelude*, the sixth, in B minor, and imagined himself dead also, drowned in a lake, with heavy, cold drops of water falling regularly on his breast. (The reiterated note B actually sounds like such dropping water.) But when Mme. Sand suggested

<sup>1</sup> One version of this story is that Chopin had been left on board a boat by himself, and, inspired by the beauty of the night and a boatman's song, wrote the *Nocturne* in question.

that it was the actual rain that he heard falling on the roof, Chopin was indignant, and "protested against the puerility of these imitations for the ear. His genius was full of mysterious harmonies of nature."

The weakness of this story lies in the fact that the sixth *Prelude* had almost certainly been composed before Chopin went to Majorca. But perhaps it was another composition. The *Fifteenth Prelude*, in D-flat, is often called *The Raindrop*, because of the repeated A-flat, and there are others that could have fitted the picture.

#### LEGENDS AND REALITIES

The *Nocturne*, opus 37, no. 1, is said to have been inspired by a vision, when Chopin had been left alone in the old monastery. He thought he saw a procession of monks and heard them chanting "Santo Dio, Santo Dio." The religious melody in the middle of this *Nocturne* actually suggests such words.

There is another story that the composer was once caught in a storm in Paris and took refuge in the church of St. Germain des Prés. He heard the service through the sounds of thunder outside, and after reaching his home he improvised the *Nocturne in C minor*, opus 48.

Concerning the *Nocturne in B major*, opus 32, no. 1, Chopin himself declared that he got his idea from Browning's poem, *In a Gondola*.

With all the possibilities of direct inspiration and improvisation, the comments of George Sand are sig-

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nificant. She says explicitly that while his compositions were always spontaneous, often developed from improvisation, he insisted upon perfection before he considered any piece of work finished. "He locked himself in his room for whole days at a time, weeping, walking up and down, repeating or changing a single measure a hundred times, writing it down and rubbing it out as many times again, and beginning all over again the next day with minute and despairing perseverance. He spent six months on one page, only to write it finally just as it had come to him in the first flush." This may be exaggerated, like many of the novelist's reports, yet it provides further food for thought on the part of those who consider genius a miracle, with no relation to hard work.

There is a temptation to read a meaning into every one of Chopin's shorter pieces, and to supply them all with possible biographical backgrounds. His own attitude toward his works is illustrated by his comment on the *Nocturne in G minor*, opus 15, no. 3. Asked for its meaning he said "After Hamlet," but then added hastily, "Let them guess for themselves." Kullak followed this advice literally, and supplied the Nocturne with a whole story of the lost Lenore, with religious consolation included. James Huneker insisted that it was "more like Poe's *Ulalume*."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> It is a coincidence that Poe, with so much of Chopin's morbidity in his poetry, exactly paralleled his years of birth and death, 1809-1849.

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Chopin got the idea of the Nocturne form from an Irishman, John Field, who first used the title for melodious works of a rather melancholy type. Field was inclined to be contemptuous of Chopin, and said, "He has a sick-room talent." But his own Nocturnes are commonplace and uninspired beside those of the younger man.

The *Nocturne in C-sharp minor*, opus 27, no. 1, has been described as "a calm night at Venice, where, after a scene of murder, the sea closes over a corpse and continues to mirror the moonlight." Nice picture!

Opus 62, no. 1, in B major, is often called the *Tuberose Nocturne*, and its opening notes actually seem to be climbing up a trellis, while a sickly fragrance spreads itself over the music. Opus 9, no. 2, in E-flat, often played by violinists in D, was inspired by a lady's remark that it was "a pity the piano could never sound like a violin."

There is a *Nocturne in C-sharp minor* which was not published until the end of the nineteenth century, and whose authorship has been disputed, although the manuscript is in Chopin's handwriting. It was first played in 1894 at a memorial concert, and the story goes that he originally sent the manuscript to his sister Louise in Warsaw, that it was supposedly destroyed in the sacking of the Zamajski Palace in 1863, but was actually saved and brought to light many years later. The matter is not particularly important because the Nocturne itself is not up to the Chopin standard.

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The *Etudes* also have their share of fact and fiction, all emphasizing the important point that these pieces are far more than studies or exercises, and might easily have been given individual titles. Chopin began this type of composition quite early in his life, for in 1829 he wrote to a friend, "I have composed a Study in my own manner," and shortly afterward he referred to several more *Etudes*.

Of his *E-major Etude*, opus 10, no. 3, Chopin said to his pupil, Gutmann, "I have never in my life written another such melody," and on hearing it played he cried out, "*O ma patrie!*" But this is a quiet melody, quite different from the ferocities of the *Revolutionary Etude*.

### STUDY IN BLACK AND WHITE

The famous *Black Key Etude*, no. 5 in this series, was not given that title by its composer. Actually the black keys appear consistently in the right hand alone. Number 18 of the set is the *Study in Thirds*, and has occasionally been associated with a Byronic poem.

The twelve *Etudes* of opus 25 were dedicated to the Countess d'Agoult, mother of Cosima Liszt von Bülow Wagner. The second, in F minor, was played by Chopin for Schumann's friend, Henrietta Voigt, in Leipzig, and her account of his playing is highly personal: "The overexcitement of his fantastic manner is imparted to the keen-eared. It made me hold my breath. Wonderful is the ease with which his velvet fingers glide, I might

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say fly, over the keys. He has enraptured me—in a way which hitherto had been unknown to me. What delighted me was the childlike, natural manner which he showed in his demeanor and in his playing.”<sup>1</sup>

The seventh *Etude* in this set, with the key of C-sharp minor, is generally called the *Cello Etude* and has actually been arranged for string quartet, with the violoncello carrying the bass melody. Hans von Bülow described it as “a Nocturne for cello and flute.”

Number 9, in G-flat, is the popular *Butterfly Etude*, whose name also did not originate with the composer and whose melody bears a startling resemblance to a passage in one of the Beethoven sonatas. The tenth *Etude* of opus 25 has recalled to some commentators the *Dance of the Dervishes*, from Beethoven’s *Ruins of Athens*. Its music is credited with “Asiatic wildness,” “a real pandemonium.”

One could go on indefinitely with such fancies, covering the *Mazurkas*, Chopin’s most accurate presentation of the Polish spirit, the *Polonaises*, also intensely nationalistic, particularly the one in A major, known as the *Military*, the *Scherzos*, which created a new and exciting form out of a well-worn name, the *Sonatas* and *Concertos*, quite different from the conventional forms suggested by those titles. It is generally known that the *Funeral March* (the only one that requires no composer’s name in front of it) was written separately, and later included in the *Sonata* whose Finale supposedly describes “the

<sup>1</sup> Schumann’s famous eulogy of Chopin is quoted on p. 123.

## *Frédéric Chopin*

wind over the graves." Naturally this march was played at Chopin's own funeral.

There is little historic background to the great *Fantasie in F minor*, perhaps the finest music that Chopin ever composed. Its dedication is to the Princess di Souzzo. The far more familiar *Fantasie-Impromptu*, in C-sharp minor, played almost as often as the *Funeral March* or the "waltz of the little dog," has found a new and doubtful favor in supplying the popular tune of pre-war days, *I'm Always Chasing Rainbows*.

The melancholy background of Chopin's life is reflected in most of his music. He was not happy in beautiful Majorca, and he nearly died before they got him back to France again. George Sand became gradually bored with mothering an invalid, and they finally separated. It may have broken his heart, as some say, but the woman whom he called to his death-bed was not Aurore Dudevant but Delphine Potočka. She sang for him just before he died, a fragile body, only forty years old, but immortal in spirit and matchless in the art that he made peculiarly his own.

## XII

### *The Fortunes of Felix Mendelssohn*



T is a relief to find one musician who was really happy for the greater part of his life, even though that life was a short one. Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy carried out the fortunate implications of his first name. (It became a Christian name in time, although he was born a Jew.)

Here is the rare instance of a composer with plenty of money, comparatively few back-stabbers and cut-throat competitors, recognized at the outset as a genius, perhaps even overpraised in his lifetime, happy in his family and friends, sought after by royalty, managers, and publishers, truly blessed in every possible way. The inevitable result of such a career is the present tendency to belittle his accomplishments. How can a composer really be great without starving? How can he be a genius if he treats his fellow-men courteously and is himself universally popular? There must be some poverty,

## *Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy*

some bad manners, some vulgarity, some mean double-dealing somewhere, or it just doesn't make sense.

Mendelssohn's first really important composition (and one of his best) might have been given a typical radio introduction if a microphone could have been set up in the spacious garden at No. 3 Leipzigerstrasse, Berlin, in the summer of 1826. It is not difficult to imagine the oily voice of the announcer:

"Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. You are listening to another of our series of intimate musicales at the Mendelssohn-Bartholdy home, and I wish I could tell you how beautiful this famous garden looks today. You know it was once a part of the Tiergarten, and used as a hunting-ground by Frederick the Great. There is a big audience present today, for we are to hear the new overture to Shakespeare's *Midsummer Night's Dream*, composed by the seventeen-year-old prodigy, Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy. This is its first orchestral performance, although the young composer and his sister Fanny have several times played it four-handed on the piano, and it is already recognized as a charming piece of fairy music.

"While we are waiting for the orchestra to tune up, you may be interested in some of the distinguished people who are here today. Of course our host, Mr. Abraham Mendelssohn-Bartholdy, is well known as one of Berlin's leading bankers, the successful son of that great philosopher, Moses Mendelssohn. His other gifted children, Miss Fanny, Miss Rebecca, and Mr. Paul Mendelssohn-

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Bartholdy, are all here with a party of their gay young friends. The veteran Carl Zelter, teacher of the talented Felix, is evidently giving some final instructions to his sensational pupil before the program begins. I think I see the philosopher Hegel, and the writer Adolph Marx, and, yes, there are the two poets, Heinrich Heine and Ludwig Tieck. Mr. Tieck, you know, is the man whose translation of Shakespeare has made the English dramatist available to German readers for the first time.

"The music will speak for itself, I am sure. You will have no difficulty in recognizing the dainty tripping of the fairies at the start, and later you may recognize the braying of Nick Bottom, the rustic clown who temporarily wears the ass's head. There is also a descending scale which the composer tells me was inspired by the buzzing of a fly. And here he is himself, ready to conduct the Overture to *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, our precocious boy-composer, Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy."<sup>1</sup>

Actually the series of Sunday concerts at the Mendelssohn home had been going on for some time. Young

<sup>1</sup> This Overture had an interesting later history. After its first performance in England, in 1829, the score was carelessly left in a hackney coach and disappeared, to turn up again a hundred years later at the Royal Academy. Mendelssohn made light of the loss, immediately rewrote the whole Overture from memory, and every note was found to agree with the orchestral parts. In 1843, at the request of King Frederick William IV of Prussia, Mendelssohn completed the incidental music to the play, the additional numbers including the *Scherzo*, whose fairy music is reminiscent of the inspired Overture, and the familiar *Wedding March*, now regularly used by bridal couples as exit music.

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Felix had been composing steadily since he was eleven years old, with a number of sonatas, symphonies, songs, and much chamber music already to his credit, and even some operas.

The pianist Moscheles refers to the Mendelssohns as "a family such as I have never known before; Felix a mature artist, and yet but fifteen; Fanny extraordinarily gifted, playing Bach's fugues by heart and with astonishing correctness—in fact, a thorough musician. The parents gave me the impression of people of the highest cultivation. They are very far from being overproud of their children; indeed, they are in anxiety about Felix's future, whether his gifts are lasting, and will lead to a solid, permanent career, or whether he may not suddenly collapse, like so many other gifted children."<sup>1</sup>

### A COMPOSER AT FIFTEEN

The fifteenth birthday of Felix had been celebrated by a dress rehearsal of his fourth opera, *Die beiden Neffen* (*The Two Nephews*) after which old Zelter solemnly raised him from the rank of "apprentice" to that of "assistant," "in the name of Mozart, and of Haydn, and of old Bach." A year before that, the boy's grandmother had given him a copy of Bach's *St. Matthew Passion*, which six years later he was to conduct in the most important revival of that master's work.

<sup>1</sup> Refreshingly different from the futile commercialism of Leopold Mozart and the absurd egotism of Franz Anton von Weber!

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Felix had also played for the poet Goethe (first at the age of twelve) and the old sage of Weimar, who could not understand Beethoven and repeatedly insulted Weber, went into raptures over Zelter's little "*Wunder-kind.*" Goethe's *Faust* gave young Mendelssohn the inspiration for the *Scherzo* of his *Octet*, opus 20 (his best work previous to the *Midsummer Night's Dream Overture*), and he also dedicated to the poet his *Piano Quartet in B minor*, opus 3, which contained the first of those typical *Scherzo* movements that may be considered Mendelssohn's most individual contribution to music. Goethe's reply took the form of two very bad poems, confirming the suspicion that his appreciation of music was limited.

Of all the musicians, Mendelssohn seems to have been the most versatile. He could paint and draw excellently; he was an all-around athlete, particularly good at gymnastics, swimming, riding, and billiards, a fine dancer, and a bit of a literary artist as well, judged by his letters and occasional poems.<sup>1</sup>

He played both the piano and organ amazingly well, and was a more than adequate performer on the violin and viola. "My recollections of Mendelssohn's playing," writes Clara Schumann, "are among the most delightful things in my artistic life. It was to me a

<sup>1</sup> With his friend Adolph Marx he edited an intimate magazine for the residents and visitors at the Leipzigerstrasse house, known in summer as *The Garden Times* and in winter as *The Tea and Snow Times*, with contributions from many distinguished authors of the day.

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shining ideal, full of genius and vitality, united with technical perfection. . . . It never occurred to me to compare him with virtuosi. Of mere effects of performance he knew nothing; he was always the great musician, and in hearing him one forgot the player, and only reveled in the full enjoyment of the music. He could carry one with him in the most incredible manner, and his playing was always stamped with beauty and nobility. In his early days he had acquired perfection of technique; but later, as he often told me, he hardly ever practiced, and yet he surpassed everyone. I have heard him in Bach, Beethoven, and in his own compositions, and shall never forget the impression he made upon me."

By the time Felix Mendelssohn was a university student at Berlin, he had written another opera, *Camacho*, produced by Spontini (but without much success), the piano *Fugue in E minor*, composed at the death-bed of his friend Hanstein, with a commemorative chorale of great beauty, and the charming song, *Ist es wahr? (Is it true?)*, which may have expressed some of the disappointment he felt over adverse criticism of his opera, but whose melody he used again a few months later in the *String Quartet in A minor*, opus 13.

Mendelssohn was a great lover of the sea. His first experience with expanses of water was at a bathing-resort called Dobberan, on the Baltic, where he received the inspiration for his Overture to Goethe's *Meeresstille und glückliche Fahrt (Calm Sea and Prosperous Voyage)*. He wrote to his beloved sister Fanny at the time: "Some-

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times it lies as smooth as a mirror, without waves, breakers or noise . . . sometimes it is so wild and furious that I dare not go in." He was heartily seasick on his first trip to England, but when approaching Naples on his Italian journey he wrote, "To me the finest thing in nature is and always will be the sea. I love it almost more than the sky. I always feel happy when I see before me the wide expanse of waters."

It was this journey to Italy that led to the so-called *Italian Symphony*, over which Mendelssohn worked for many years. There is nothing particularly Italian about it, except that the Finale is a *Saltarello* (an Italian dance of the *Tarantella* type). It has been argued that the slow movement represents a "Pilgrims' March," with possible Roman background, but Moscheles insisted that the composer had in mind an old Bohemian folk-song. The first movement has been rather fancifully traced to Mendelssohn's own *Hunting Song* for piano.

His other well-known symphony, the *Scotch*, earns its title more definitely. Mendelssohn visited Scotland with his friend Klingemann in 1829, and was deeply impressed by Holyrood Castle, with its memories of Queen Mary and the murder of Rizzio. After gazing at the ruined chapel outside, he wrote to his parents, "I believe I found today in that old chapel the beginning of my Scotch symphony."

Actually the theme of the introduction (which he wrote down immediately) may have been suggested by the song of a girl at an Edinburgh inn. The second

## *Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy*

movement begins with a tune on the five-tone scale, which is characteristic of Scottish folk-music (and also of many other countries). Many years later the completed *Scotch Symphony* was dedicated by Mendelssohn to Queen Victoria, whom he visited at Buckingham Palace. She sang his own music for him, in a small but well-trained voice, making a few mistakes, and admitting that her nervousness made her short of breath.<sup>1</sup>

The trip to Scotland produced another masterpiece in the Overture known both as *The Hebrides* and as *Fingal's Cave*. At Staffa, in the famous islands, the two friends visited the historic cave, whose pillars of basalt look like "the interior of a gigantic organ for the winds and tumultuous waves to play upon." Mendelssohn wrote to his sister the same day, "That you may understand how extraordinarily the Hebrides affected me, the following came into my mind." The notes represented what later became the first ten measures of the Overture, a definite suggestion of the surging sound of the sea.

Years later Ferdinand Hiller, who lived with Mendelssohn in Paris, wrote: "He told me how the thing came

<sup>1</sup> The tribute of the Prince Consort to Mendelssohn, written in a text of *The Elijah*, is worth quoting: . . . To the noble artist who, when surrounded by the Baal-worship of the false, has, like a second Elijah, employed his genius and his skill in the service of the true; who has weaned our ears from the senseless confusion of mere sound, and won them to the comprehension of all that is harmonious and pure—to the great master who has held in his firm control and revealed to us not only the gentle whisperings of the breeze, but also the majestic thundering of the tempest.

In grateful remembrance,

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to him in its full form and color when he saw Fingal's Cave; he also informed me how the first measures, which contain the chief theme, had come into his mind. In the evening he was making a visit with his friend Klingemann to a Scottish family. There was a pianoforte in the room; but it was Sunday, and there was no possibility of music. He employed all his diplomacy to get at the pianoforte for a moment; when he had succeeded, he dashed off the theme out of which the great work grew."<sup>1</sup>

### HOW THE ELIJAH WAS WRITTEN

It was England also that was chiefly responsible for Mendelssohn's greatest work, his oratorio, *The Elijah*. As early as 1836 he had referred in a letter to Klingemann to possible work on "an Elijah, a St. Peter, or even an Og of Bashan!" A year later, after his happy marriage to the beautiful Cécile Jeanrenaud, a parson's daughter from Frankfort, Mendelssohn was called to England to conduct his *St. Paul* and play the organ and piano at the Birmingham Festival. He grumbled at leaving his young wife, but spent two days in London with Klingemann, organizing the oratorio that he had long wanted to write.

<sup>1</sup> Any such evidence of direct inspiration is of course to be welcomed, since the origin of great music is too often utterly prosaic. But the Scottish blue laws cannot have been such a handicap to Mendelssohn, since he had already jotted down the notes in his letter to Fanny. The composer later revised the complete score, as was his custom, often after publication, saying that the middle section "smelt more of counterpoint than of train oil, sea gulls and salt fish."

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His success in Birmingham was tremendous, but it was eight years later that the Festival Committee invited him to write an oratorio especially for their city. This brought him back to *The Elijah*, on which his friend Schubring had meanwhile been working. As the work progressed, portions of it were sent to London for translation.

Mendelssohn went to England for the ninth time to conduct the final rehearsals, and the opening performance took place at Birmingham, August 26, 1846. "No work of mine," he wrote his brother the same evening, "ever went so admirably at the first performance, or was received with such enthusiasm both by musicians and the public as this. . . . I never in my life heard a better performance, no, nor so good, and almost doubt if I can ever hear one like it again."

It was a morning performance, and the sun burst forth just as the composer took his place, creating a dramatic effect and an immediate ovation. Eight of the numbers, four choruses and four solos, were encored!<sup>1</sup> Mendelssohn was mobbed by the crowd at the end, recognized as the fitting successor to the Handel of *The Messiah*. A little over a year later he was dead, at the age of only thirty-eight.

A few other compositions of this rare genius deserve mention, although their story background is limited. The first of his popular *Songs without Words* was dedicated to his sister Fanny, whose death shortly preceded his

<sup>1</sup> Even so, the composer made many revisions before publication.

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own, which was unquestionably hastened by the shock. (He fainted on receiving the news.) Several more of these little piano pieces were given at various times to the same close confidante of the composer's life, one of them celebrating the birth of her son, after her marriage to the artist, Wilhelm Hensel.

### MENDELSSOHN'S VIOLIN CONCERTO

The *Violin Concerto*, in E minor, which has become the best known composition of its kind in the whole literature of music, was written for Ferdinand David, and owed much to the advice and inspiration of this fine violinist, who introduced it at the Leipzig Gewandhaus in 1845, with Niels Gade conducting. As early as 1838 Mendelssohn had written to David, "I should like to write a violin concerto for you next winter. One in E minor is running in my head, and the beginning does not leave me in peace."

A year later he wrote again: "It is nice of you to urge me for a violin concerto. I have the liveliest desire to write one for you, and if I have a few propitious days here [Hochheim] I'll bring you something. But the task is not an easy one. You demand that it should be brilliant, and how is such a one as I to do this? The whole of the first solo is to be for the E string!" (He carried this out literally, and succeeded in writing a concerto which makes a brilliant effect without being nearly so difficult as some of the others.)

The *Reformation Symphony*, which follows the *Scotch* and *Italian* in public esteem, gets its title from the fact

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that it was written for the tercentenary festival of the Augsburg Confession, in 1830. Its interest lies chiefly in the use which Mendelssohn made of Luther's great Reformation hymn, *Ein' feste Burg ist unser Gott* (*A Mighty Fortress is Our God*) which his idol, Bach, had turned into a cantata a century before.

When Moscheles asked the composer to act as god-father to his son Felix, Mendelssohn characteristically responded with a letter, a drawing, and a cradle song, later published as opus 47, no. 6. The Overture to *Ruy Blas* was written on order, in less than two days, although he disliked the play. *Antigone* was also a commission and is remembered today chiefly because of a cartoon carried by *Punch* after its first English performance, showing the gentlemen of the chorus with plaid trousers peeping out from under their Greek robes. The *Melusina* Overture was written for London, as were many of his songs and piano pieces, including the most widely popular *Auf Flügeln des Gesanges* (*On Wings of Song*) and the much abused *Spring Song*.<sup>1</sup>

Mendelssohn could write for any occasion and any audience. Of all composers he was the most meticulous in carrying out contracts and keeping verbal promises. His creative work, like his playing, came spontaneously and naturally from an apparently inexhaustible source. Throughout his brief career he was the favored child of Fortune. It is a pity he could not have lived longer, to stop the yapping mouths of his belittlers.

<sup>1</sup> Which Irving Berlin put into ragtime as *That Mesmerising Mendelssohn Tune*.

## XIII

### *Wagner, Women, and Song*



It is easy to like the music of Richard Wagner; it is almost impossible to like him as a man. In fairness to him, the first story concerning his creative work should show him in the best possible light, as an artist and a human being.

The time is 7.30 on Christmas morning of the year 1870; the place, Triebschen, a quiet villa on the shore of Lake Lucerne; the woman, Cosima Wagner, daughter of Franz Liszt and the Countess d'Agoult, now Wagner's wife and the mother of his three children, of whom the youngest, Siegfried, was born over a year and a half ago.

Christmas Day happens to be also Cosima's birthday, and her husband has arranged a musical surprise for her. Little Siegfried was born at the time when Wagner was immersed in the opera of the same name, third of the great cycle known as *Der Ring des Nibelungen*. It is natural that the birthday and Christmas present should

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be a *Siegfried Idyl*, commemorating both the Wagnerian hero and the Wagnerian baby.

Hans Richter has been staying with the Wagners as copyist and general assistant, and he is responsible for the presentation copy of the music that his master composed during the month of November at the villa. He is also viola player in the impromptu orchestra for the occasion, doubling in the trumpet for the few necessary measures.<sup>1</sup>

Other orchestral players have been assembled in Zürich, where two rehearsals have been held. On the morning of the performance, the musicians are carefully and silently grouped upon the staircase. Wagner himself is at the top, as conductor. Then come two first violins, two second violins, two violas, a flute, an oboe, two clarinets, a bassoon, and two horns. At the bottom, completely out of sight of the conductor, are a cello and a double bass.

In spite of all handicaps, the performance is a brilliant success. How could Cosima help being delighted with this unique "*Treppenmusik*" ("Staircase Music") that has since become one of the most beloved of Wagner's compositions? It is repeated several times during the day, with a limitless succession of public performances later.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Richter reports that he had to practice the trumpet part in the empty barracks, and that these absences and some mysterious trips to Zürich made Mme. Wagner concerned over his apparent lack of industry.

<sup>2</sup> The *Siegfried Idyl* was originally called *Triebischener Idyll*. It is not generally realized that its main theme is derived from the familiar horn call of Siegfried

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This is a picture of Richard Wagner in one of his pleasantest and most agreeable moments. He must have known many such moments, for all his life he seems to have had an almost hypnotic fascination for practically all women, and even for a number of men. The sum total of his human relationships marks him as one of the most selfish, inconsiderate, ruthless, and altogether impossible people that ever lived. Yet even his meanest and most outrageous actions often had the effect of tying his adorers still closer to him.

### HOW DID HE DO IT?

Cosima herself had been the wife of his friend and admirer, Hans von Bülow. Wagner had made desultory love to her sister Blandine, but eventually realized that Cosima was the one woman who could make him happy. (But this was only after many other experiments.)

Bülow not only stepped aside without a murmur of complaint, but allowed himself to be publicly insulted in the press, conducted splendid performances of Wagner's music, and eventually went on a special concert tour which raised a considerable sum for the Bayreuth campaign. His reverence for the artist overcame what must have been a natural detestation of the man.

Wagner stands practically alone in history as a genius who actually succeeded in making people accept his own

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himself, merely dropping out a few notes and giving it an atmosphere of charming sweetness instead of militant defiance. An actual folk-song also appears in this composition, the lullaby, *Schlaf', mein Kind, schlaf' ein*, whose melody is strikingly similar to Handel's *He shall Feed His Flock*.

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self-appreciation and then justified this acceptance by the creative miracles that his self-centered life produced.

The story of his works is the story of the unprincipled use of borrowed money, of absurd extravagance for the glorification of personal vanity, of a constant succession of conquests which could hardly be dignified with the name of love, and of turgid, sophomoric attempts to justify his selfishness, to revolutionize art and society, and to give some deep significance to ideas which represented a hodgepodge of current philosophy and long-dead mythology.

Every woman in Wagner's life appears somewhere in his operas; and always he toys with the theme of renunciation, of sacrifice for a friend, meanwhile renouncing nothing himself, except in wordy letters, and letting all his friends do the sacrificing. There is no excuse for Wagner except in his music, but it so happens that he was absolutely right in his aesthetic estimate of himself.

Wagner began his music later than any other great composer. He was fifteen years old before he took it seriously, and it was only at eighteen that he really learned something about composition and counterpoint. But meanwhile he had practically grown up in the theater (his stepfather, Ludwig Geyer, was an actor, and his brother and sisters were early on the stage), and it was drama rather than music that shaped his later career.

In the youthful Wagner's first attempt at play-writing, he killed off no less than forty-two characters and had to

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"call the greater number back as ghosts" in order to have a last act. His first opera, *Die Hochzeit* (*The Wedding*), was the result of a "thwarted passion" for a girl named Jenny Pachta, whom he met in Prague, through his sister Ottilie. The plot was all about a bride who pushed her lover out of the window and then collapsed at his funeral.

### EARLY THEATRICAL EXPERIENCE

By 1833, at the age of twenty, the composer was filling the position of chorus-master at the Würzburg theater, secured for him by his brother Albert, who was tenor and stage-manager of the company. Here he developed an honest admiration for the outstanding singer of the day, Wilhelmine Schroeder-Devrient, but also carried on less exalted love affairs with Therese Ringelmann, a member of the chorus, and Friederike Galvani, who was engaged to the oboe player.

Wagner's second opera, *Die Feen* (*The Fairies*) written at this time, was a frank imitation of Weber, but not a success. His next attempt was *Das Liebesverbot* (*Forbidden Love*), adapted from Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure*, attacking Puritanism and glorifying sensuality. The opera was produced at Magdeburg later, but it failed to attract a second audience, and merely disrupted the company.

It was this company, however, that included one of Wagner's most important loves, the leading juvenile

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actress, Minna Planer, who became his wife in 1836. Twice she ran away from him with another man, a wealthy merchant named Dietrich, but each time she came back, and they finally settled in Riga but had to leave when Wagner's debts threatened to land him in jail.

They went to Paris, taking along a big Newfoundland dog, and starved there for two years. Wagner had already been working for some time on his *Rienzi*, based on Bulwer Lytton's story, and he finished this opera in Paris. But although he had met Meyerbeer on the way, and received encouragement from him, he made no impression on Parisian circles, earning the barest pittance by copying and arranging music (some of it for the cornet!) and writing articles. He and Minna pawned their effects, took in lodgers, and managed to keep alive somehow.

Wagner endured these privations solely because of his sublime confidence in his own future. Its justification came in the acceptance of *Rienzi* for performance in Dresden, largely on the recommendation of Meyerbeer. Meanwhile the composer had made a one-act libretto out of *The Flying Dutchman*, a subject inspired partly by a story of Heine's and partly by his own sea voyage, and sold it to the Paris Opéra. But with *Rienzi* on the way to production, he decided to turn the *Dutchman* into a full-sized opera of his own, and again his confidence was justified. Meyerbeer's recommendation once more proved helpful, and it was accepted by Berlin.

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Wagner borrowed from friends and relatives and returned to Germany as promptly as possible.

The Dresden performance of *Rienzi* in 1842, with Schroeder-Devrient in the cast, made Wagner an immediate success and resulted in his engagement there as *Kapellmeister*. It also brought a Dresden production of *The Flying Dutchman*, which failed completely, even though Schroeder-Devrient sang the role of Senta. The public was not yet ready for the greater Wagner (*Rienzi* had been in the Meyerbeer style) but he was now more stubbornly confident than ever.

### FROM RIENZI TO TANNHÄUSER

Waging a continuous battle with the critics and his own Dresden colleagues, he proceeded to write *Tannhäuser*, whose subject he had found in a German *Volksbuch* and long considered as operatic material. He kept putting off his creditors and borrowing from other sources (including 1,000 thalers from Mme. Schroeder-Devrient), sinking large sums in the private publication of his operas, which merely increased his losses, and living far beyond his means.

*Tannhäuser* was produced in 1845, at first with little success, but gradually winning the favor of the public, chiefly because they liked the tunes of the *Pilgrims' Chorus* and the *Song to the Evening Star*, both remnants of an older technique. Of the composer's ideals of music-drama there was as yet no general conception.

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Both *Lohengrin* and *Die Meistersinger* were started about this time, the latter merely as a roughly sketched libretto, for which Wagner found the subject matter in Gervinus' *History of German Literature*. When he arrived at the composition of the music, over twenty years later, he included at least one actual melody of the historic Mastersingers, the so-called "long tone," which was tightened up into the second march tune, made familiar by the popular *Prelude*.

Theme from *Die Meistersinger*



"Long Tone" of the Mastersingers



The *Lohengrin* story came out of the same *Volksbuch* that had supplied *Tannhäuser*, and the opera was two years in the making. Before it could be produced, Wagner had become involved in revolutionary activities which resulted in his banishment from Germany. With the help of Franz Liszt, who had now been added to his financial and artistic cooperators, he fled to Paris.

At this point two more women came to his aid, one of them a Frau Ritter, whom he had not even met (forerunner of Tschaikowsky's Nadejda von Meck), and the other a wealthy young Englishwoman, Jessie Taylor Laussot, wife of a Bordeaux businessman. He

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accepted money from both of them, and made love to Jessie besides. This affair was broken up by the combined efforts of Minna and M. Laussot, who threatened to shoot Wagner on sight.

Rejoined by his wife at Zürich, Wagner wrote to Liszt, self-pityingly, "Not a year has passed recently without bringing me *once* to the very verge of a decision to make an end of my life. Everything in it seems so lost and astray. A too hasty marriage with a woman estimable but totally unsuited to me has made me an outlaw for life." No wonder these two eventually separated!

Wagner continued to live on the generosity of Frau Ritter, and leaned more and more upon Liszt, who gave *Lohengrin* its first performance at Weimar, and thereby established Wagner's European reputation as a composer. For a time, however, his creative work consisted mostly of articles, anti-semitic, anti-operatic, revolutionary in a confused fashion, clumsy attempts to explain his theories to an uncomprehending public, with no appreciable improvement of his artistic or financial position.

It was Liszt who spurred him on to the significant music-dramas that still lay in the future. Among Wagner's essays was one on *The Nibelungs*, in which he argued the superiority of myths over history, since they were "based on the direct intuitions of the people, whereas history is based on written records which are either merely speculative or concern only the doings of kings." This was followed by *The Nibelung Myth as a*

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*Sketch for a Drama*, which went back to Scandinavian sources for its materials. The next step was a poem, *Siegfried's Death*, which eventually became the libretto for *Götterdämmerung*.

When Liszt offered him 1,500 marks for music to *Siegfried's Death*, Wagner suggested a lighter, more attractive opera, to be called *Young Siegfried*. Before long, he had developed the idea of a complete musical dramatization of the *Nibelungen* myth, working backwards through *Die Walküre* to a prologue, *Das Rheingold*.

He felt that such a stupendous cycle, performed on four successive days, could arrive at production only after society had been purged by a revolution such as he still awaited, but meanwhile he was prepared to do the work, if he could only keep alive. He completed the text for the entire cycle in 1853, and read it to his friends in Zürich, distributing fifty de luxe copies, printed at his own expense, or rather, at the expense of his creditors. In this select circle were the wealthy Rhenish merchant, Otto Wesendonck, and his lovely young wife, Mathilde. It was just about time for another Wagnerian love affair.

Zürich could not be persuaded to finance the *Ring*, but held a Wagner festival, which was hugely successful. Liszt came down to spend a week with the exiled composer, and Wagner soon departed for a rest in Italy. It was at Spezia that he fell into an exhausted sleep one day, after a country walk. According to his own account, he seemed to be "sinking in swiftly flowing water.

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The rushing sound formed itself in my brain into a musical sound, the chord of E-flat major, which continually re-echoed in broken forms."<sup>1</sup> It was the inspiration for the opening of *Rheingold*.

### THE MUSIC OF THE RING

He returned to Zürich, in a creative mood at last, but did not start composing until he had seen Liszt again at Basl, and with him the Princess Wittgenstein and the enormously talented young Hans von Bülow. Then he plunged into the music of *Rheingold* and *Die Walküre*, and in a little over a year both were completed.

The feminine influence which seemed absolutely necessary to Wagner's musical creativeness came this time, of course, from Mathilde Wesendonck. Her husband had been chiefly responsible for financing the Zürich festival,<sup>1</sup> and she herself had been Wagner's pupil, a "white page" on which he had "undertaken to write." But she soon became his "wish-child," the embodiment of all the heroines of the *Ring*, and particularly Brünnhilde. To her he dedicated the *Prelude* to the *Walküre*.

With Minna absent in Germany, trying to arrange for the lifting of his exile, he spent his afternoons playing for Mathilde what he had composed in the morning. He called himself her "twilight man," and began to dwell

<sup>1</sup> "I laid the whole festival at the feet of one beautiful woman," Wagner wrote later.

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fondly on the renunciation implied by their friendship. He read Schopenhauer and wrote to Liszt, "I now take delight in living for my wife."

There was a brief interruption while he went to London to conduct a season of the Philharmonic concerts, not a very satisfactory experience, with Mendelssohn still the rage, and some unfavorable criticisms which could be traced to the influence of the now hostile Meyerbeer.<sup>1</sup>

But he enjoyed meeting Berlioz, and tells how they "discussed the problems of art, philosophy, and life at a five hours' sitting," with the result that "we suddenly discovered each other as companions in suffering and I thought myself on the whole happier than Berlioz." American college papers please copy! Soon after his return to Zürich a very convenient arrangement was made by the Wesendoncks whereby Wagner was given, at a nominal rent, a small house and garden adjoining their own new mansion on the shore of the lake. He called it his "asylum," and it was there that he began work on *Tristan und Isolde*, whose heroine, with her guileless King Mark, was living right next door.

<sup>1</sup> In the early days at Dresden Wagner and Mendelssohn had both contributed compositions to the unveiling of a statue of Friedrich August I of Saxony. Wagner's report was that his own "simple, heartfelt composition had entirely eclipsed the complex artificialities of Mendelssohn." These "artificialities" consisted of the singing of the Saxon anthem, *Heil dir im Siegerkranz* (the same melody as *God Save the King*) as a countertheme to one of Mendelssohn's own invention, by two choirs.

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In September, 1857, Wagner brought Mathilde the complete text of *Tristan*. According to his own account of the event, "On this day, at this hour, I was born again. . . . A lovely woman . . . threw herself into the sea of pains and troubles so that she might create for me this glorious moment, might say 'I love you.' . . . At last the spell of my yearning was broken."

So it was Otto who made the renunciation. Is it merely a coincidence that the dullest music in *Tristan* is sung by King Mark, and that the operatic attachment of the lovers is justified by the magic potion which robbed them of self-control?

### TRISTAN'S INSPIRATION

Wagner struggled with the problem in his usual fashion, writing to Liszt that he was "at the end of a conflict in which everything a man holds sacred is involved," running away to Paris for three weeks, to return and write quite calmly: "The last trace of egoism vanished from my heart, and my resolve to visit you both again now represented the triumph of the purest humanity over final stirrings of selfish longing."

Otto evidently understood this, but Minna did not. She intercepted a letter to Mathilde which contained enough of "selfish longing" to make her furiously jealous. Her health was seriously affected, and she embarrassed both Wagner and his Isolde with her pointed and rather coarse remarks.

But meanwhile Wagner had written some inspired music, to Mathilde's words, including the song, *Träume*,

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that contains the love theme of his greatest opera. Regretfully he left his "asylum," with renunciation for once actually forced upon him. In the words of his autobiography, "Red with shame, the sun crept up from behind the mountains. Then I took one more lingering glance at the house opposite." The rest of the *Tristan* music was written at Venice and Lucerne, and its despairing ecstasy owes much to Mathilde Wesendonck.

It is hard to believe that Wagner almost immediately appealed to her husband for further financial aid. Wesendonck generously helped him out by purchasing the incompletely *Ring* operas for 24,000 francs, with which Wagner went to Paris, rented a large house, transferred his furniture from Zürich, and hired servants for himself and Minna. He determined to give a series of his operas in Paris, and promptly sold the copyright of *Rheingold* to the publisher Schott, although it legally belonged to Wesendonck.<sup>1</sup>

This Parisian experience was again unfortunate. Wagner revised the score of *Tannhäuser*, elaborating the ballet music and the character of Venus, as a sop to French audiences. But the ballet came too early in the opera to satisfy the Jockey Club, who always arrived late but insisted on seeing the dancing. At the second and third performances there were catcalls, jeers, whistles, an unparalleled demonstration of audience hostility, and the opera had to be withdrawn.

<sup>1</sup> He squared this account later by giving Otto the rights to *Götterdämmerung*.

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Wagner, who had by this time received permission to re-enter Germany, went first to Vienna (on borrowed money) and later to Weimar, making futile efforts to arrive at a production of the now completed *Tristan und Isolde*. It was Mathilde Wesendonck, inaccessible but still friendly, who persuaded him to take up the composition of *Die Meistersinger*, whose book he had sketched so many years before. In the contemplation of the character of Hans Sachs he arrived at a complete personal detachment, a peace of mind such as he had seldom experienced. Schott paid him a good advance, but the work progressed slowly.

Wagner consoled himself in his "renunciation" with two new loves. One was Mathilde Maier, whom he would have married if he could (he went so far as to ask Minna for a divorce), but who refused him because she suffered from a hereditary deafness. The other was a lively young actress named Friederike Meyer. (The coincidences in names were entirely accidental.)

Yet at the moment when success should have been at his command, Wagner again found it difficult to persuade the world to support him in the style to which he was accustomed. He still felt that he must live extravagantly: "Mine is a highly susceptible, intense, voracious sensuality, which must somehow or other be flattered if my mind is to accomplish the agonizing labor of calling a nonexistent world into being."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> He had a particular passion for elaborate silk and satin dressing-gowns, and he was never in his life without a pet dog, which could give him the dumb adora-

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To his friend, Frau Eliza Wille, whom he jokingly called "Fricka," he said, "I am not made like other people. I have finer nerves—I must have beauty and brilliance and light. The world owes me what I need. I can't live on a miserable organist's post, like your master Bach!"

Her sister, Henriette von Bissing, another wealthy widow, had promised to pay his debts and provide for his future, but failed to do so after discovering his absurd extravagances. The influential critic Hanslick, invited to a party where Wagner read the libretto of his *Meistersinger*, recognized Beckmesser as a caricature of himself and left in a fury. The production of *Tristan* continued to be delayed, and no source of income could be found. Wagner finally had to leave Vienna to escape being thrown into a debtor's prison. Minna was definitely through with him.<sup>2</sup>

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tion that he craved. A contemporary description of him is almost brutally realistic: "When he showed himself, he broke out as a whole, like a torrent bursting its dikes. One stood dazzled before that exuberant and protean nature, ardent, personal, excessive in everything, yet marvelously equilibrated by the predominance of a devouring intellect. The frankness and extreme audacity with which he showed his nature, the qualities and defects of which were exhibited without concealment, acted on some people like a charm, while others were repelled by it. His gaiety flowed over in a joyous foam of facetious fancies and extravagant pleasantries; but the least contradiction provoked him to incredible anger. Then he would leap like a stag, roar like a tiger. He paced the room like a caged lion, his voice became hoarse and the words came out like screams; his speech slashed about at random. He seemed at these times like some elemental force unchained, like a volcano in eruption. Everything in him was gigantic, excessive." What a terrible person to live with!

<sup>2</sup> She died a few years later, in 1866.

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Then, just when everything seemed hopeless, the miracle occurred, "the supreme triumph of his prophetic will," the greatest stroke of luck by which any artist was ever preserved for the benefit of the world. A boy of nineteen, who had long worshiped the genius of Wagner, came to the throne of Bavaria as King Ludwig II. One of his first acts was to send for the composer and offer him protection and financial support for the rest of his life.

### THE INCREDIBLE SOLUTION

In a frenzy of joy, Wagner wrote to Frau Wille: "He wants me to stay with him always, to work, to rest, to produce; he will give me all I need for that. I am to be my own absolute master, not a *Kapellmeister*, nothing but myself and his friend. And he means all this seriously and literally, just as if we two, you and I, were talking together. What do you say to that? What do you say? Is it not fabulous? Can it be anything but a dream? . . . My happiness is so great that I am overwhelmed by it."

Unquestionably this wise and generous action on the part of a monarch later known as "the mad king"<sup>1</sup> saved Wagner's life and made it possible for him to complete a task which would otherwise have been lost to music. He was absolutely at the end of his resources, and his friends had grown heartily sick of supporting him and putting up with his expensive whims.

<sup>1</sup> Ludwig eventually committed suicide.

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The first thing Ludwig did was to give him enough money to pay off his creditors. Then he set him up in a villa near the royal castle at Lake Starnberg and let him do as he pleased. Wagner was ready to create again, but he lacked the one necessary element, the woman's touch.

He sent for the Bülow family to be his house guests, getting Hans an appointment as court pianist to make it official. He asked them not to consider this invitation "the sudden fruit of a passing whim, but as an important paragraph in the last will and testament of a dying man."

The Bülows came, and Wagner saw and conquered. Cosima was the "one woman" who could inspire him to the completion of his monumental work. For a time she acted as his secretary, general manager, and house-keeper, and gradually she became indispensable to him.

*Tristan* was at last given a splendid production in Munich, with Bülow conducting and the great Ludwig Schnorr and his wife in the leading roles. Four performances were given at the command of the King, and then Schnorr, perhaps the finest Wagnerian tenor of all time, died suddenly of a rheumatic fever.

THE SAME OLD STORY

Now began the usual political intrigues, jealousies, innuendos, and insidious attacks. Wagner was accused of having a hypnotic influence over the King. He was called an evil genius, an anti-Christ, a despoiler of the royal treasury. Diplomacy demanded that he leave the

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court temporarily, and he went to Switzerland to work in peace and quiet. It was there that he found Tribschen, the scene of the *Siegfried Idyl*, and it was there that Cosima joined him, to remain his inspiration and almost constant companion for the rest of his life.

The music of *Die Meistersinger* had hardly been started. *Siegfried* still needed a third act, and much orchestration. *Götterdämmerung* was still only a book, and *Parsifal* lay in the dim future; and Wagner was now fifty-three years old. Without Cosima, all of this might never have been accomplished, regardless of the royal subsidy.

*Die Meistersinger* was completed first, and arrived at production in Munich by June of 1868. Bülow was again the conductor, and Hans Richter trained the chorus. This greatest of all musical comedies was received with a chorus of abuse and adverse criticism, largely based on the personal feelings of rival musicians, small-town writers, and the clergy.

Bülow, who had been decorated and made court *Kapellmeister*, was the chief sufferer, and his sensitive nature bore the brunt of the moral vindictiveness of Wagner's enemies. He conducted one more performance of *Tristan*, and then retired to Italy, never again to come near Wagner or his ex-wife.

Back at Tribschen with Cosima, Wagner completed *Siegfried* and turned his poem of *Siegfried's Death* into the music drama of *The Dusk of the Gods* (*Götterdämmerung*). Now his problem was to find a place where the entire

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cycle of the *Ring* could be produced as a festival, in the style of which he had dreamed.

It would need a new opera-house, an organization limited to true lovers of music, a sacred exclusiveness such as the world had never known before.

He found the right spot in the little Bavarian town of Bayreuth, and began immediately a campaign for subscriptions. He secured the interest and enthusiasm of the leading minds of Germany. He even interviewed Bismarck, who declared afterward that while he had a perfectly good opinion of his own abilities, he had never encountered in any other person such self-conceit as Wagner's.

Three hundred thousand thalers were needed to build the new opera-house, and this sum was to be raised by selling a thousand shares at 300 thalers each. A society called *Wagneriana* was formed, and under the leadership of the young pianist, Karl Tausig, and a hard-working woman, Frau von Schleinitz, the campaign began.

### BAYREUTH AND WAHNFRIED

King Ludwig, who had been angered by Wagner's contempt of public opinion and his prejudice against Munich, relented sufficiently to give him 25,000 gulden, with which to build for himself the villa Wahnfried near the opera-house. The cornerstone of the festival theater was laid on Wagner's fifty-ninth birthday, May 22, 1872.

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But subscriptions came in slowly, and four years passed before the first performances could be given. Wagner raised some money himself, through concerts, and was paid \$5,000 for a very bad *Centennial March*, written for America's commemoration of the Declaration of Independence at Philadelphia.

The first festival productions at Bayreuth had their full share of mishaps. Some of the singers were inadequate. Some of the scenery did not work. The dragon's neck, manufactured in England, was shipped by mistake to Beyrouth, Syria (!), so the head had to be jammed on to the body, with grotesque effect.

Yet the unique setting, the concealed orchestra, the magnitude of the work, and the unmistakable genius of the music made a deep impression. Three complete performances of the cycle were given in the summer of 1876, with Richter conducting, Wilhelmj as concertmaster, Niemann as Siegmund, Unger as Siegfried, Materna as Brünnhilde, and Lili Lehmann as one of the Rhine-maidens. There was a deficit of about \$30,000.

With all the talk of the sacred exclusiveness of Bayreuth, Wagner ended by selling tickets to tourists in conventional style, and with all of his anti-semitic prejudice, he permitted the Jewish impresario, Angelo Neumann, to form a "Richard Wagner Touring Company" and take the *Ring* cycle all over Germany, with vast profits resulting.

He was already interested in a new idea, a semi-religious drama, glorifying his pet theory (but only a

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theory) of the renunciation of passion. It was to *Parsifal* that Bayreuth was finally to be consecrated. The story of the guileless fool who could salve a guilty conscience by his own pure pity naturally fascinated him. He had even thought of having *Parsifal*, in his wanderings, call upon Tristan as he lay dying at Kareol! (The best craftsmen of the stage sometimes toy with absurdities.)

King Ludwig took care of the *Ring* deficit, and guaranteed \$75,000 to make the production of *Parsifal* possible. It was written mostly at Wahnfried, in Bayreuth, and required five years for its completion. During that time a final feminine influence came into Wagner's life in the person of Judith Gautier, daughter of the French novelist, who evidently both attracted and irritated the composer. He found revenge in making her the character of Kundry in *Parsifal*.

This final music-drama reached its Bayreuth performance in the summer of 1882. Among the musicians who assisted in its preparation was Engelbert Humperdinck, whose *Hänsel und Gretel*, more than ten years later, was to captivate the children of all ages, with its practical application of Wagnerian ideals to a universally beloved fairy tale.

Less than six months after the production of *Parsifal*, Wagner was dead of a heart attack in Venice (February 13, 1883). He had feared that he might not live to see this farewell masterpiece, perhaps not even to complete it. He was buried in his own garden at Wahnfried, to

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the music of his own *Siegfried Funeral March* from *Götterdämmerung*.

Richard Wagner is unique in the history of music for the dependence of his creative work on environment, for the complete ignoring of conventional human standards and for the triumph of a personal conviction of superiority over all restraining influences, including that of his own personality. Imitators should wisely confine themselves to his music.

## XIV

### *The Liszt Cooperative Program*



Most of the stories about Franz Liszt are told by people who saw him as an old man, after he had become a legend, a tradition, a kindly, white-haired "Abbé," with a large wart on his face. The professional "Liszt pupil," who treasured every comment of the master, on the weather or any other subject, was a familiar bore at the turn of the century.

Today Liszt is remembered as perhaps the greatest virtuoso that the piano has ever known, as the composer of a mass of "program music," much of which is cheap and theatrical, and, most significantly, as a sincere friend and helper of other musicians. His services to Wagner alone would entitle him to a vote of thanks from the world, and he unquestionably supplied many actual themes for the younger composer who became his rather unconventional son-in-law.

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At a rehearsal of the *Ring* operas, Wagner is said to have remarked to Liszt, "Now you are about to hear something of your own," to which the tactful answer was, "I wish all my work were equally sure of immortality." Wagner was rude and selfish, but created unique works of art. Liszt was polite and generous, and lives through his cooperation rather than his creations. He might be called the William Lyon Phelps of his day, with a good word for almost anything that was not downright bad.

Liszt made his world reputation as a pianist so early in life that he had the comfortable experience of amassing a fortune through concert tours, while still a young man, and then living as he pleased. He went through no such struggles and disappointments as most musicians had to endure. When he was a boy prodigy of twelve, his genius was recognized by Beethoven and Schubert, as well as by his audiences. Throughout his life, people liked him.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Even at the age of seventy-five, when Liszt visited London for the last time, his playing created wild enthusiasm. Hermann Klein describes an impromptu performance at the Royal Academy thus: "The shout of joy uttered by the students when he sat down at the piano was something to remember. It was followed by an intense silence. Then the aged but still nimble fingers ran lightly over the keys, and I was listening for the first time in my life to Franz Liszt. To attempt to describe his playing, after the many well-known Weimar pupils and distinguished writers who have tried to accomplish that task, would be mere presumption on my part. Even at seventy-five, Liszt was a pianist whose powers lay beyond the pale to which sober language or calm criticism could reach or be applied. Enough that his greatest charm seemed to me to lie in a perfectly divine touch, and in a tone more remarkable for its exquisitely musical

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As a composer, Liszt is the consistent exponent of "program music." Practically every piece he wrote had a definite, descriptive, or suggestive title, and since these titles all came out of his own experience they actually tell the story of his creative work.

Possibly his earliest published composition was his variation on a waltz by Diabelli, the twenty-fourth in a set to which all the leading musicians of the day contributed;<sup>1</sup> and this was one of the few examples of "absolute music" from his pen.

Youthful travels in Switzerland and Italy inspired the *Années de Pèlerinage* (*Years of Pilgrimage*), three sets of piano pieces, all with titles indicating their background. The Swiss series included *The Chapel of William Tell*, *At the Lake of Wallenstadt*, *Beside a Spring*, *Storm*, *Obermann Valley*, and *The Bells of Geneva*. Musical recollections of Italy were expressed in such compositions as *Il Penseroso*, *Canzonetta of Salvator Rosa*, *Three Sonnets by Petrarch*, *After a Reading from Dante*, *Angelus*, and the *Cypresses and Fountains of the Villa d'Este*. There was also the group called *Venice and Naples*, which included a *Gondoliera* and a *Tarantella*.

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quality than for its volume or dynamic force, aided by a technique still incomparably brilliant and superb."

Liszt improvised in London that year on themes from his oratorio, *St. Elizabeth*, continuing the habit of a lifetime, in which he was one of the last to imitate the giants of the past. The satirical Rossini is credited with a rather cruel dig at the youthful Liszt, who was asked to improvise at a party. "Yes," said Rossini, "why don't you improvise that piece you improvised at Mme. X's last week, and Mme. Y's the week before?"

<sup>1</sup> Beethoven wrote thirty-three variations, instead of the one for which he was asked.

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Spain suggested to Liszt a *Rhapsodie Espagnole*, *Folies d'Espagne*, and a *Jota Aragonesa*. His love of nature, combined with religious feeling, produced the popular *Légendes*, *St. Francis Walking on the Water* and *St. Francis Preaching to the Birds*. Even his *Etudes* had such names as *A Sigh*, *Mazeppa*, *Will o' the Wisp*, *Eroica*, *The Wild Hunt*, *Evening Harmonies*, *Snow-plough*, *Forest Murmurs* (the popular *Waldesrauschen*), and *Dance of the Gnomes* (the almost equally popular *Gnomenreigen*).

### WHO INSPIRED LIEBESTRAUM?

Best known of all his pieces, perhaps, is the *Liebestraum* (*Dream of Love*), one of a series of three Nocturnes, all based upon songs of his own. (It has been a natural temptation to set sentimental words to this music, and several people have done so, including the tenor, Tito Schipa.)

The much abused *Liebestraum* might have referred to any one of a number of loves in the life of Liszt. The two most important were the Countess d'Agoult, whom he met in Paris, and who became the mother of his three children (including the courageous Cosima), and the Princess Wittgenstein, who controlled his later life at Weimar. It does not matter who the inspiration may have been, so long as the music, regardless of its title, suggests a satisfactory degree of sentimentality.

A more definite background can be found for the famous *Hungarian Rhapsodies*. Liszt was born at Raiding, in Hungary, and his father, a steward in the service of

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Prince Esterhazy, remembered the days when Haydn conducted the orchestra at the palace. As a boy, Franz must have heard the music of the gypsies, and he renewed his acquaintance with their wild folk-melodies when he later returned to his native land to give a series of concerts for the benefit of flood sufferers.

Between 1839 and 1847 he brought out ten sets of *Hungarian National Melodies*, and as late as 1859 he wrote a book on *The Gypsies and their National Music in Hungary*. Liszt's *Hungarian Rhapsodies* may have been inspired by one of his favorite Schubert compositions, the *Divertissement à la Hongroise*, in G minor, opus 54, of which he arranged several versions. But these fifteen highly individual pieces which have endeared Franz Liszt to the whole world are thoroughly his own, even though built from borrowed themes. Each one shows the typical contrast between the slow *Lassu* and the fast-moving *Friss* or *Friska* (characteristic Hungarian dances). There is no mistaking their racial significance, and they rank among the most successful treatments of folk-music.

But the most original contribution made by Liszt to creative music was his invention of the Symphonic Poem, as a link between program music in its smaller forms and the absolute symphony itself. He composed thirteen orchestral pieces in this form, which has been imitated by many others since his time. Here again the titles consistently indicate the story in the background.

One of the most important of the Symphonic Poems is *Tasso*, for which the composer himself wrote an explana-

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tory preface: "In the year 1849 the one-hundredth anniversary of Goethe's birth was celebrated throughout Germany; the theater in Weimar, where we were at the time, marked the twenty-eighth of August by a performance of *Tasso*.

"The tragic fate of the unfortunate bard served as a text for the two greatest poets produced by Germany and England in the last century: Goethe and Byron (*sic*). Upon Goethe was bestowed the most brilliant of mortal careers; while Byron's advantages of birth and of fortune were balanced by keenest suffering. We must confess that when bidden, in 1849, to write an Overture for Goethe's drama, we were more immediately inspired by Byron's reverential pity for the shades of the great man, which he invoked, than by the work of the German poet. Nevertheless Byron, in his picture of Tasso in prison, was unable to add to the remembrance of his poignant grief, so nobly and eloquently uttered in his *Lament*, the thought of the 'Triumph' that a tardy justice gave to the chivalrous author of *Jerusalem Delivered*. We have sought to mark this dual idea in the very title of our work, and we should be glad to have succeeded in pointing this great contrast—the genius who was misjudged during his life, surrounded, after death, with a halo that destroyed his enemies. Tasso loved and suffered at Ferrara; he was avenged at Rome; his glory still lives in the folk-songs of Venice. These three elements are inseparable from his immortal memory. To represent them in music, we first called up his august spirit as he

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still haunts the waters of Venice. Then we beheld his proud and melancholy figure as he passed through the festivals of Ferrara where he had produced his master-works. Finally we followed him to Rome, the eternal city, that offered him the crown and glorified in him the martyr and the poet.

“*Lamento e Trionfo*: such are the opposite poles of the destiny of poets, of whom it has been justly said that if their lives are sometimes burdened with a curse, a blessing is never wanting over their grave. For the sake not merely of authority, but the distinction of historical truth, we put our idea into realistic form in taking for the theme of our musical poem the motive with which we have heard the gondoliers of Venice sing over the waters the lines of Tasso, and utter them three centuries after the poet.”

Another Symphonic Poem, *Mazeppa*, is based on a Victor Hugo poem, which was preceded by one of Byron’s on the same subject. Both verses tell of the sufferings of the Asiatic chieftain in his wild ride, realistically suggested in the galloping rhythms of Liszt’s music.

One of the last of the series is the *Hunnenschlacht* (*Battle of the Huns*) which was directly inspired by Wilhelm Kaulbach’s picture of the same name, showing the ghosts of the Huns and Romans fighting in the air, with Rome itself in the background. In a letter to the painter’s wife, written in 1857, accompanying an arrangement of the music for two pianos, Liszt refers to ‘the meteoric and solar light which I have borrowed from the painting,

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and which at the Finale I have formed into one whole by the gradual working up of the Catholic chorale, *Crux Fidelis*, and the meteoric sparks blended therewith. . . . As I have already intimated to Kaulbach, in Munich, I was led by the musical demands of the material to give proportionately more place to the solar light of Christianity, personified in the Catholic chorale . . . than appears to be the case in the glorious painting, in order to win and pregnantly represent the conclusion of the Victory of the Cross, with which I, both as a Catholic and as a man, could not dispense."

### THE MEANING OF LES PRÉLUDES

The most popular of the Symphonic Poems, of course, is *Les Préludes*, which goes back to Schubert's C-major symphony for one of its themes (possibly even to the old song of *Malbrough*), but whose opening supplied César Franck with the corresponding part of his symphony in D minor. It has been claimed that this familiar composition was begun in Liszt's early twenties and completed at Weimar much later.

Liszt had started a choral piece on *The Four Elements*, but was dissatisfied with the poem and laid it aside. He then became interested in a passage from the *Meditations* of Lamartine, *Les Préludes*, and used it as the background for an enlargement of this material, in orchestral form, completing it for the Pension Fund of the Weimar orchestra in 1854. Lamartine's text, as represented by Liszt, has been translated thus:

"What is our life but a series of preludes to that unknown song, the first solemn note of which is sounded by death? Love forms the enchanted daybreak of every life; but what is the destiny where the first delights of happiness are not interrupted by some storm, whose fatal breath dissipates its fair illusions, whose fell lightning consumes its altar? And what wounded spirit, when one of its tempests is over, does not seek to rest its memories in the sweet calm of country life? Yet man does not resign himself long to enjoy the beneficent tepidity which first charmed him on nature's bosom; and when the 'trumpet's loud clangor has called him to arms,' he rushes to the post of danger, whatever may be the war that calls him to the ranks, to find in battle the full consciousness of himself and the complete possession of his strength." (It doesn't make much sense, and the fault cannot be entirely Lamartine's.)

The earliest of the Symphonic Poems, dated 1830, is called *Héroïde Funèbre*, but it also was completed much later. *Hungaria* was first written as a *Hungarian March* for piano and published in that form. There is also a *Bergsymphonie* ("What One Hears on the Mountain"), which went through several transitions.

*Prometheus*, dating in its original form from 1850, was later turned into a choral work, with text by Richard Pohl. *Festklänge* (*Festive Sounds*) served as an Overture for the fiftieth anniversary of Schiller's *Huldigung der Künste*.

*Orpheus* was conceived during rehearsals of Gluck's *Orfeo* at Weimar, and seems to have influenced Wagner's

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*Prelude to Lohengrin* and the *Wanderer* theme in the *Ring*. *Die Ideale*, inspired by Schiller's poem of the same name, was written for the unveiling of the Goethe-Schiller monument at Weimar in 1857.

*Hamlet* is of course a tribute to the Shakespearian tragedy, and finally there is a Symphonic Poem called *From the Cradle to the Grave*, based on a sketch by Michael Zichy, consisting of three parts, *The Cradle*, *The Struggle for Existence*, and *At the Grave*.

Similar to the Symphonic Poems are two *Episodes* from Lenau's *Faust*, of which the second has become familiar in its piano version as the *Mephisto Waltz*. There is also a *Faust Symphony* by Liszt, which he himself declared an offspring of the Berlioz *Damnation of Faust*. But he was also influenced by Ary Scheffer's pictures of the leading characters in the drama.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> This same artist made a portrait of Liszt, and when the composer assumed a noble attitude, Scheffer said quietly, "Oh, not like that, my friend; such things do not impress me." Liszt answered, in confusion, "Forgive me, dear master, but you do not know how it spoils one to have been an infant prodigy." A series of cartoons in a Hungarian comic paper, *Borszom Lanko*, satirizes Liszt's attitudes at the piano: "He appears with the smile of conscious superiority, tempered by the modesty of his garment (as Abbé). Tremendous applause. . . . The first chord—r-r-r-r-rum!—Looking back, as if to say 'Attention—I now begin!' . . . With eyes closed, as if playing only to himself. Festive vibration of the strings . . . Pianissimo. Saint Assisi Liszt speaks to the birds. . . . His face brightens with holy light . . . Hamlet's broodings; Faust's struggles. Deep silence. The very whisper becomes a sigh. . . . Chopin, George Sand, Reminiscence, Sweet Youth, Moonlight, Fragrance and Love. . . . Dante's Inferno. Wailings of the Condemned (among them those of the piano). Feverish excitement. The tempest closes the gates of Hell.—*Boom!* . . . He has played, not only for us but with us. Retiring, he bows with lofty humility. Deafening applause. *Eviva!*"

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Each of these characters is represented by a movement of the symphony. The first is Faust himself, the second Gretchen, and the third Mephistopheles. In this final movement the themes of the first two are parodied, and at the close a male chorus sings Goethe's words beginning, "*Alles Vergängliche*" ("Everything mortal") and ending with "*Das Ewig-Weibliche zieht uns hinan*" ("The eternal feminine draws us on").

Liszt's only other symphony is likewise a piece of program music, with the title *Dante's Divine Comedy*. It was dedicated to Wagner, who suggested that even Liszt might not be equal to the task of portraying Paradise musically in the Finale. The first two movements are called *Inferno* and *Purgatorio*, and the third became, instead of *Paradiso*, a *Magnificat* in the ancient ecclesiastical style, sung by women's voices.

### ABSOLUTE MUSIC AND TRANSCRIPTIONS

Even when Liszt wrote a piece of absolute music, as in his first *Piano Concerto* (E-flat), he could not resist a touch of the programmatic. When he played the familiar opening theme to his friends, he told them the notes could be translated into the words, "*Das versteht ihr alle nicht,*" with the interrupting chords saying, "*Nur ich!*" ("All of you do not understand this," "only I!"). This concerto was heartily condemned by the critics, particularly Hanslick, because it used a triangle in the orchestra!

But some of Liszt's most important work may be found in his transcriptions, arrangements, and para-

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phrases of other men's music. He was particularly fond of Schubert, and did much to popularize his compositions by rewriting his songs for the piano and elaborating his waltzes (*Soirées de Vienne*). He arranged six of Bach's organ *Preludes* and *Fugues* for the piano and wrote a set of variations on his *Weinen, Klagen*.

His *Fantasias* on operatic music, such as *Rigoletto*, *Il Trovatore*, and *Don Giovanni*, are not so significant, and he even stooped to the *Carnival of Venice*, eternal show-piece of cornet players. There was a *Fantasia* also on *God Save the King*, and one still hears the brilliant and justly popular variations on Paganini's *Caprice, La Campanella*. Mendelssohn's music to *A Midsummer Night's Dream* was given a practical piano arrangement by Liszt, and he did a similar service to many symphonies and other orchestral works of his predecessors. He even transcribed for the organ some of Chopin's *Preludes*, parts of Verdi's *Requiem* and Wagner's *Tannhäuser*, and wrote an organ *Fantasie and Fugue* on the chorale from Meyerbeer's *Prophet*.

Certainly no contemporary composer of any worth at all could complain of Liszt's neglect. Perhaps he knew that his creative gifts were limited, and deliberately chose to use his enormous technical ability in the service of more original talents than his own. In spite of his poses, his mannerisms, and his frequent artificiality of style, he seems to have been a fundamentally sincere person. It is a pity that such a personality could not have had the creative inspiration of a Beethoven or a Wagner.

## XV

### *Verdi's Mass Production*



GIUSEPPE VERDI is another of those composers of whom people always think as white-haired and white-bearded old men. Therefore it may be best to start the stories of his long series of operas with one from his early life.

The peasant boy, born at Le Roncole in 1813 (the same year as Wagner, but to outlive the German composer by seventeen years), had shown early signs of musical ability. There still exists a spinet on which he picked out his first chords, and the legend is that he attacked it with a hammer when some of these escaped him. (This was one of the few instances of temperament in his entire eighty-seven years.)

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He used to follow the organ-grinder around town, took great pleasure in the brass band at Busseto (dangerous foundations for future taste), and, as an acolyte, became so absorbed in the sounds of the church organ that an impatient priest knocked him unconscious.<sup>1</sup>

At the age of ten Giuseppe had been made organist of the same church, and was also taken into the household of Antonio Baretti, a music-loving merchant of Busseto, whose daughter he eventually married. So far it sounds like a success story. It is in Milan that the tragedy begins.

Young Verdi has moved to the big city, with his wife and two children, armed with the score of his first opera, *Oberto*, which is produced to great applause and immediately purchased by the publisher Ricordi. The impresario Bartolomeo Merelli orders a comic opera, *Un Giorno di Regno*, and while Verdi is working at this, rather against his taste, his two children suddenly die of a mysterious disease, to be followed two months later by their mother.

In spite of this cataclysm, the comedy is finished and proves an utter failure. No wonder the young composer decides to give up music altogether and to retire with his grief forever. It is to the resourceful Merelli that the world owes the existence of practically all Verdi's creative work.

He has agreed to cancel the contract for three more operas, but finds an opportunity to give Giuseppe the libretto of Solera's *Nabucco* (*Nebuchadnezzar*) "just to

<sup>1</sup> Legend has it that the priest was later killed by lightning.

look it over and give him an opinion.''' The sorrowing Verdi sees through the trick, and, on arriving at his home, angrily throws the book on the table. As it opens, a line catches his eye, and involuntarily he begins to read.

The rest of the story can be told in Verdi's own words: ''I read one page, then another; then, decided as I was to keep my promise not to write any more, I did violence to my feelings, shut up the book, went to bed, and put out the candle. I tried to sleep, but *Nabucco* was running a mad career through my brain, and sleep would not come. I got up, and read the libretto again, not once but two or three times, so that in the morning I could have said it off by heart. Yet my resolution was not shaken, and in the afternoon I went to the theater to return the manuscript to Merelli.

'''Isn't it beautiful?' says he.

'''More than beautiful, wonderful.'

'''Well, set it to music.'

'''Not in the least; I won't.'

'''Set it to music, set it to music!'

'''And so saying he gets off his chair, thrusts the libretto into my coat pocket, takes me by the shoulders, shoves me out of his room, slams the door in my face, and locks himself in. I looked rather blank, but not knowing what to do, went home with *Nabucco* in my pocket. One day a line, the next day another line, a note, a bar, a melody. . . at last I found that by imperceptible degrees the opera was done.'''

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The production of *Nabucco* marks the real beginning of Verdi's career. But his work continued to preserve a balance between success and failure, and it is a mistake to think that he had an easy path to fame and fortune.

*Nabucco* became immediately popular, and so did his next opera, *I Lombardi*, which gave Verdi his first experience with censorship. Solera had made his libretto from a poem by Tommaso Grossi. As soon as the Archbishop of Milan heard of it, he pronounced it "profane and irreverent" and ordered his chief of police, Torresani, to forbid the performance.

Luckily Torresani was an aesthetic soul, and after a conference with Merelli and Solera, he offered a tactful compromise. "I am not the man to prevent genius from getting on in this world," he said. "Go on; I take the whole thing upon myself; only put *Salve Maria* instead of *Ave Maria*, just to show the Archbishop that we are inclined to please him; and as for the rest, it is all right."

### OPERATIC POLITICS

*I Lombardi* made its appeal to the Italian public chiefly through the anti-Austrian interpretation that could be given to some of the words. It was revised later, under the title of *Jerusalem*, but did not succeed in this form.

Verdi's next opera, *Ernani*, was written for Venice, but quickly spread all over the world, and again it was given a political significance. Piave's libretto was based on the *Hernani* of Victor Hugo, of which the Preface has been

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considered a manifesto of romantic art. But it was easy for the Venetians to interpret the heroine, resisting unwelcome attentions, as a country held forcibly in subjection. The hero became an exiled patriot instead of an ordinary outlaw. There was a scene of conspiracy which was stopped by the police, but the audience still found plenty of material for patriotic demonstrations.

Then came three failures in a row, *I due Foscari*, produced in Rome, *Giovanna d'Arco*, in Milan, and *Alzira*, in Naples. The first was founded on a tragedy of Byron's. The second had Adelina Patti in the title role, but to no avail. The third stemmed from a tragedy by Voltaire.

The habit of success returned with *Attila*, a fitting sequel to *Ernani* in Venice. Once more the public chose to find a political significance in its lines, and there were tumultuous demonstrations at every performance. By comparison, *Macbeth* was a failure, but this may have been because there was no leading tenor part.

Verdi was now invited to write a new opera for His Majesty's Theater in London, and after toying with the idea of a *King Lear* (which he always wanted to write), decided in favor of the material of Schiller's *Robbers*, which became *I Masnadieri*. It was not a real success, although Jenny Lind sang in the original cast. But it resulted in the offer of a conductorship, which Verdi had to decline because of his publisher's contracts.

He carried out these contracts by composing two flat failures, *Il Corsaro* and *La Battaglia di Legnano*. But he balanced these with another success, *Luisa Miller*,

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adapted by Cammarano from Schiller's *Kabale und Liebe*.

A story, which may or may not be true, is told concerning the opening performance of this opera. There was a certain amateur named Capecelatro, who was considered by Verdi's friends a *jettatore*, i.e., a jinx, unconsciously possessed of the evil eye. He was blamed for the failure of *Alzira* because he had shaken hands with Verdi just before the performance and predicted a great success. Every effort was therefore made to keep him away from the composer on the opening night of *Luisa Miller*.

### FIGHTING THE EVIL EYE

A large crowd of Verdi's friends surrounded him constantly, and refused to let Capecelatro get within hailing distance. For two acts all went well, and the house was in an uproar of excitement. Before the final act, Verdi was receiving congratulations on the stage. Suddenly a man leaped from the wings, and, with a cry of "At last!" threw his arms around the composer. As he did so, a piece of scenery fell and narrowly missed injuring them both. It was Capecelatro! The last act was coldly received, although it is the best of the three.

*Rigoletto* opens the period in Verdi's life that really counted for posterity, and its history is one of the most interesting in his entire career. He had suggested to Piave that he make a libretto out of Victor Hugo's *Le Roi s'amuse*, changing the title to *La Maledizione*.

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The official censor's comment on this libretto is worth quoting: "His Excellency the Military Governor Chevalier de Gorzkowski in his respected dispatch of the twenty-sixth instant directs me to communicate to you his profound regret that the poet Piave and the celebrated Maestro Verdi should have found no better field for their talents than the revolting immorality and obscene triviality which forms the argument of the libretto entitled *La Maledizione*, submitted to us for eventual performance at La Fenice. His Excellency has decided that the performance must be absolutely forbidden, and wishes me at the same time to request you to abstain from making further inquiries in this matter."

It seems that His Excellency objected to the idea of a curse on the stage; he did not want Gilda to be put in a sack; he did not want Rigoletto to be a hunchback; and he insisted that the Duke be represented as a moral and estimable gentleman, or, if not that, then at least Rigoletto must not be permitted to upbraid him for his conduct! (King Francis I had already been changed to a Duke of Gonzaga.)

Curiously enough, all these objections were removed by turning the villain into the Duke of Mantua and changing a few other names, including the title. Again it was an aesthetically-minded police captain, Martello, who solved the problem. Verdi went to work at once, and *Rigoletto* was produced in Venice with huge success. So carefully did the composer guard his melodies that the popular *La Donna e Mobile* was not given to the tenor

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until the day before the dress rehearsal. "It will be whistled all over the streets if it once gets out," said Verdi, and he was right.

Two years later *Il Trovatore* appeared in Rome, another tremendous success, in spite of its horrible plot, taken from a Spanish play by Garcia Gutierrez. But *La Traviata*, which followed in a little over a month, fell flat, chiefly because of the singers. The tenor had a cold, and the baritone sulked through his part, which he did not consider sufficiently important, completely missing the possibilities of the Germont-Violetta duet. But it was the prima donna, Signora Donatelli, who proved the greatest handicap. She was so fat that when the doctor announced her imminent death from consumption the audience broke into roars of laughter. But this operatic version of *Camille* became a great success later, especially in Paris when Christine Nilsson sang the heroine.

*I Vespri Siciliani* was written for Parisian audiences, to a French libretto by Scribe, who curiously chose a subject that could not have appealed to his countrymen, as they were represented in a very bad light. (They were massacred by the Sicilians.) But it was fairly well received. In Italy the police insisted on a new libretto, eliminating the idea of revolution, and it reappeared under the noncommittal title of *Giovanna di Guzman*, without creating particular interest.

One of the worst of Verdi's failures was *Simon Boccanegra*, built by Piave from another drama by Gutierrez, who had supplied the material of *Il Trovatore*. It suffered

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from a bad plot, a bad libretto, and a bad performance. Boito revised it later, and it made a far better impression.

The next opera to run into political opposition was *Un Ballo in Maschera*. The original title was *Gustavo III*, and the story dealt with the Swedish king who was murdered at a ball. The idea was rather disturbing to King Ferdinand, and the attempted assassination of Napoleon III was a bit too timely for comfort. The librettist Somma succeeded in making nonsense out of Scribe's drama, and eventually the censors were appeased, largely by the simple trick of turning a King of Sweden into a Governor of Boston.

### MUSICAL PATRIOTISM

But there were plenty of complications before the opera reached production. Verdi stuck to his guns and was sued by the San Carlo Theater of Naples, to which he responded with a countersuit. The populace became greatly excited over the affair, and Naples was close to an actual revolution. Crowds followed the composer through the streets and stood outside his house shouting "*Viva Verdi.*" It was generally understood that the letters of his name signified to the public mind "*Vittorio Emanuele Re D'Italia.*" Even acrostics have their uses in the expression of patriotism.

Before *Gustavo III* became *Un Ballo in Maschera*, it was briefly called *Una Vendetta in Domino*, and the censor also suggested the title *Amelia degli Adimari*. It was demanded

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that the time be shifted from the seventeenth to the fourteenth century, and that the disguise of a sailor used by the tenor in a sea song be changed to that of a hunter. Verdi finally wrote the music in three months, and the opera was successfully produced in Rome.

St. Petersburg (now Leningrad) was the scene of the première of *La Forza del Destino*. Piave borrowed his plot from a Spanish drama, *Don Alvar*, by the Duke of Rivas. The libretto was later revised by Ghislanzoni. It was more successful in Italy than in Russia. A critic claimed that Eleonora's aria was reminiscent of Schubert's *Ave Maria*, and Verdi wrote him a letter to refute the charge, insisting that "of all composers, past and present, I am the least erudite."

*Don Carlos*, whose book was prepared by Méry and Du Locle from Schiller's drama, had a Parisian production, which was only moderately successful, perhaps because at the first performance the Empress Eugénie turned her back to the stage in evident disapproval of the Marquis of Posa's utterances concerning the rights of man.

Next came a commission from the Egyptian government to write an opera for the opening of the Suez Canal. Camille du Locle supplied the libretto of *Aïda*, but the work was delayed because Mariette Bey, the French Egyptologist, who was responsible for the scenery, could not leave Paris while it was occupied by the Germans. The opera was finally given in Cairo in December, 1871, and proved to be the finest creation of its composer up

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to that time. It is the perfect example of balanced music and drama, and still deservedly popular.

Meanwhile Rossini had died in Paris (1868) and it was suggested by Verdi that the Italian composers collaborate in producing a *Requiem* in his memory. He himself contributed the final number, *Libera Me*, but the other twelve were so far below this standard that the whole plan was dropped. On the death of the dramatist Alessandro Manzoni, a few years later, Verdi decided to use this composition for the close of a complete work, now known as the *Manzoni Requiem*. Hans von Bülow viciously attacked this *Requiem*, calling it "a monstrosity, unworthy of an ordinary pupil of any musical school in Germany." Later he retracted this opinion, admitted that the work brought tears to his eyes, and wrote Verdi an enthusiastic and apologetic letter.

Verdi also contributed a *Hymn of the Nations* to the London World's Fair, as one of four representative composers of different countries. (The others were Auber for France, Meyerbeer for Germany, and Sterndale-Bennett for England.) His hymn, for soprano solo and chorus, was remarkable chiefly because of the way he brought the English, French, and Italian national airs into the Finale.

### OTELLO AND FALSTAFF

There are two more operas to Verdi's credit, *Otello* and *Falstaff*, both written in his old age (the second at eighty), when his career seemed to have come to an end.

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They show the influence of Wagner, but represent also a new style and an individual technique for the Italian composer. Arrigo Boito was responsible for both texts, achieving a remarkable adaptation of the Shakespearian originals.

*Otello* was introduced at La Scala, Milan, in 1887, with Tamagno as the Moor and Victor Maurel as Iago. A letter from Verdi to Ricordi gives an amusing index to his attitude toward singers: "Even after Tamagno has learnt the music, there will be a good deal to do in the way of interpretation and expression. I shall have to say things to your 5,000-lire tenor that are quite unnecessary for the others, and that may wound his *amour-propre* and his susceptibilities, especially when Maurel is present. This kind of thing makes for bad humor; ill-natured words follow and then one never knows how it will end. We must avoid this pitfall at all costs. But what can one do?

"If the season were not so far advanced, I might ask him to come here. But how should we pass the time? I could not make him sing the whole day long, and after working a couple of hours he would be on my hands. I should have to entertain him, talk to him, play billiards, or stroll about with him, which would tire me, and just now I cannot do it. It would be quite impossible for me.

"Another alternative would be to ask him to Genoa, anticipating our arrival by getting there on the fifteenth or twentieth of this month. Tamagno could learn the

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role with Faccio, and then come on to Genoa on the twentieth. He might find rooms at the Londra or the Milano and come to me at noon for a couple of hours' work; then he could go for a walk and return at six for a meal with us. After a cup of coffee and a cigar we could review the morning's work. This would be an excellent plan, but I dare not suggest it to him. I have not the courage to ask him to spend a hundred lire after seeing him travel second class with his daughter on this very line between Genoa and Milan."

(This sounds like a pretty canny old gentleman of seventy-three.)

That the sparkling musical comedy of *Falstaff* could have been written by an octogenarian is one of the eternal miracles of art. Maurel played the title role in its première at La Scala, but it was some time before the public fully appreciated its genius. It is the sane, tolerant expression of a man who has known life and realizes that it must not be taken too seriously. In the final scene the actors advance to the footlights and announce that everything in the world is a jest, and for this final music Verdi uses a tune that he had heard sung years before by children at play. It is a nice balancing of youth and age, a philosophy that could have grown only gradually upon the man who wrote the blood and thunder of *Il Trovatore* and *Rigoletto* and other tragedies.

Giuseppe Verdi, who died within the memory of the present generation, was able to prove in a long and useful life that genius is not necessarily a pain in the neck of

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civilization, that the absurdities of politicians can be circumvented by diplomacy, and that there is a place in the world for music that exists for its own sake, without hidden meanings or exaggerated messages, without rebellion against tradition or distortions of the conventional, in short, a music that millions of people will continue to hear with pleasure, not worrying too much about just how good it really is.

## XVI

### *So This is Brahms*



THE stories about Johannes Brahms are mostly anecdotes, giving the impression of a sane, modest, lovable personality, entirely free from the exciting surprises that accompanied the dramatic and self-conscious temperament of a Wagner or a Liszt. The biographical background of a Brahms composition is likely to sound just about as dull as the average program note. There were no violent upheavals of the spirit, no tempestuous struggles with his environment. Brahms simply went ahead and wrote great music.

The most important event of his life was unquestionably his meeting with Robert Schumann, one of the rare instances in musical history of an established composer recognizing the genius of a newcomer, and announcing it fearlessly to the world, long before the discovery's really significant works had been written.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Schumann made the same startlingly correct appraisal in the case of Chopin, on the strength of a set of variations and a Rondo.

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Born in 1833, Brahms was twenty-three years younger than Schumann. The son of a Hamburg double-bass player, he had developed his musical ability steadily and methodically. As a boy he earned fifty cents a night playing waltzes for the sailors and their girls in some of Hamburg's lowest dives. But as he improvised his three-quarter time at the piano, he always read a book, propped up on the rack in front of him. Brahms was not the sort to waste his time.

An early concert tour with the Hungarian violinist, Eduard Réményi, laid the foundation for those Hungarian dances that became so popular later, and also produced a story that may or may not be true. It seems that in a certain town the piano was found to be half a tone flat. Réményi refused to alter the pitch of his violin to this extent, so Brahms transposed a Beethoven sonata half a tone up, playing without notes.<sup>1</sup>

It was through Réményi that Brahms met Joseph Joachim, the greatest violinist of his day, and a notable conductor and able composer as well. Joachim gave him letters to both Schumann and Liszt.

The experience with Liszt was unfortunate. Brahms met him in Weimar, where the great virtuoso was living in regal style, at the expense of the Princess Wittgenstein. He was too shy to play for the master, so Liszt took two of his manuscripts (the *Scherzo* in E-flat minor and the

<sup>1</sup> The sonata is said to have been that in C minor, opus 30, no. 3, which means that Brahms played it in C-sharp minor, an incredible feat, even if he had had the notes in front of him.

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*Sonata in C major*) and played them at sight, keeping up a running comment as he played. (Try doing this while playing even *Chop Sticks* or *Peter Piper*.)

Brahms was amazed and delighted with this exhibition of skill. But when Liszt played his own *Sonata in B minor*, putting all his famous temperament into the performance, he suddenly found his young visitor fast asleep. The two composers never did exactly hit it off after that.

But Schumann was a different story. Brahms had sent him some of his manuscripts, but they had been returned unopened (a classic model for Tin Pan Alley today). He was only twenty years old, and frightened at the thought of facing the sage of Düsseldorf, with his brilliant piano-playing wife.

Joachim provided courage by giving a joint recital with him at Göttingen, which also made enough money to eliminate financial worries for a while. The violinist and the pianist were congenial from the start, and their friendship was of the rarest sort, almost entirely free from jealousy or misunderstanding. Joachim had taken for his musical motto the notes F, A, E, meaning, "*Frei aber einsam*" ("Free but lonely"). Brahms changed this to F, A, F, "*Frei aber froh*" ("Free but glad"). It is a motto that appears often in his later work.

The young composer, stocky and blond and idealistic, made his Rhine journey to Düsseldorf mostly on foot, as Siegfried had done it in the dim days of the Gibichungs. He stopped en route to visit some friends who encouraged him in his determination to meet the great

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Schumann face to face. But he was still a very worried boy when he finally knocked on the door of the Schumann house in Düsseldorf. His reception was a complete surprise.

"We have been expecting you," said Schumann, now a serious, rather sad-faced man of forty-three. "Joachim has written so enthusiastically about your music."

The embarrassed Johannes mumbled something in reply. Schumann tactfully led the way to the piano, and, once at the keyboard, the ruddy-faced, awkward youngster became a new man. He began to play his *Sonata*, which Liszt had complimented. After only a few measures, Schumann tiptoed to the door.

"Clara," he called softly upstairs. "Clara, come down as quickly as possible." He stopped the young man at the piano, to introduce his wife, the outstanding woman of the day in musical circles.

"Please begin again," he said to Brahms. "I want my wife to hear it all." To Clara he whispered, "Now you are going to hear music such as you have never heard before."

### **"NEUE BAHNNEN"**

Brahms played for the Schumanns everything he had composed up to that time, including a lot of pieces that he later destroyed. He stayed with them for a month, and became immediately their close friend and protégé.

Schumann's health was already failing, and life for him had become a series of disappointments. But he sat

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down to write a final article for the journal he had founded years ago, the *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*, and under the title of *Neue Bahnen* (*New Paths*) he gave Brahms such a send-off as to make him the talk of all musical Europe.

A few sentences are enough to give the general idea: "It seemed to me . . . that a musician would inevitably appear to whom it was vouchsafed to give the highest and most ideal expression to the tendencies of the time, one who would not show us his mastery in a gradual development, but, like Minerva, would spring fully armed from the head of Jove. And he has come, a young man over whose cradle Graces and Heroes kept watch. His name is Johannes Brahms, and he comes from Hamburg." Even with this anticlimax, it was a real tribute.

Unfortunately it created far more enemies for Brahms than friends, and he was for the rest of his life put in the position of having to live up to the most extravagant expectations. That he should have done so, eventually overcoming even the hatred of the Wagner-Liszt faction, is one of the miracles of musical history.

Brahms was the one person whom Schumann really wanted to see during the tragic period of madness that preceded his death. He confided to him the melodies that he thought he heard from the ghosts of Schubert and Mendelssohn. When he died, three years after their first meeting, he practically left his widow to the blond genius who was fourteen years her junior.

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Unquestionably Brahms loved Clara Schumann, first as a musician, but eventually also as a woman. He never married, and it is possible that her presence in the background, almost up to the time of his own death, kept him from taking the step to which he often referred rather plaintively. (He put opera in the same class as marriage, and never experimented with either.)

One of the loveliest songs of Brahms, *Meine Liebe ist grün*, is a setting of the poem by Clara's son Felix. His early compositions for the piano were all influenced by his friendship with the Schumanns.<sup>1</sup>

There is a set of *Variations*, opus 9, on a theme by Schumann himself (from his first *Albumblatt*). They are full of intimate, personal touches. The ninth variation refers directly to the second of this same series of *Albumblätter*, and the tenth is an echo of Clara's own theme, used by Schumann in his opus 5. In the last of the sixteen variations, one may recognize a deliberate suggestion of *Der Dichter Spricht*, from the close of Schumann's *Kinderszenen*.

While they were waiting for Joachim to appear, in those early days, Brahms contributed a movement to a violin sonata, which was written as a surprise for their guest. It is a Scherzo, now known as *Sonatensatz in C minor*, and was not published until 1906. Everyone was much surprised when Joachim was able to name the composer of each movement (two by Schumann himself).

<sup>1</sup> He arranged a series of *Kindervolkslieder* for the Schumann children. It is often assumed that the popular *Wiegenlied* is a folk-song, but wrongly.

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Four *Ballades*, including the dramatic *Edward*, date from this period, and were probably stimulated by the books Brahms found in the Schumann library, although it was Julius Allgeyer who lent him a copy of Herder's *Scottish Ballads*, in which he must have found the *Edward* story. (There is also an *Intermezzo*, with the musical effect of a lullaby.)

Schumann tried from the outset to interest Brahms in the composition of a symphony. In 1854 he wrote to Joachim: "But where is Johannes? Is he flying high or only under the flowers? Is he not yet ready to let drums and trumpets sound? He should always keep in mind the beginning of the Beethoven symphonies; he should try to make something like them. The beginning is the main thing; if only one makes a beginning, then the end comes of itself."

Brahms actually sketched out three movements of a symphony at this time, but he was not satisfied with his work. Later he incorporated the first two in his *Piano Concerto in D minor*, and the third became a part of his *German Requiem* ("Behold All Flesh"). This attempt was encouraged by a performance of Beethoven's *Ninth Symphony*, which Brahms heard for the first time in Cologne, in 1854.

But his own first symphony did not appear until 1876, although Brahms had shown a tentative version of its first movement to his friend Dietrich in 1862. He was determined to get it right before giving it a public performance or publication. He said to the orchestral con-

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ductor, Levi, "I shall never compose a symphony! You have no conception of how the likes of us feel when we hear the tramp of a giant like him (Beethoven) behind us."

### THE BRAHMS SYMPHONIES

It has been claimed that this first symphony, in C minor, represents the whole relationship between Brahms and the Schumanns. Hans von Bülow (who became an ardent Brahmsian after his unfortunate experiences with the Wagner libido) called it "the tenth," as the only possible successor to the immortal nine of Beethoven.

There are those who believe that Brahms deliberately or unconsciously imitated the choral theme of Beethoven's *Ninth Symphony* in his own Finale. The resemblance, however, is limited to the second part of both melodies, and is so slight as to be fairly considered accidental.

The individual horn call which occurs in this Finale has been traced to the tones of the Alpine horn in the Bernese Oberland, with which Brahms was certainly familiar. But there is also a marked reminiscence of the tones of Big Ben, in the *Westminster Chime*, and it is possible that Brahms made this quotation as a gesture to his English friends.

The *Second Symphony* of Brahms was composed right after the first. He had a habit of writing his pieces in pairs, two *Serenades*, two *Piano Quartets*, opus 25 and 26, two *String Quartets*, opus 51, and two *Overtures*, the *Tragic* and the *Academic*. In this also he was like Beethoven.

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A letter written by the composer to his friend Dr. Billroth, in 1877, illustrates the rather elaborate whimsicality with which he belittled his monumental compositions. Of his masterpiece in D major, he said, "I do not know whether I have a pretty symphony; I must inquire of skilled persons." This Gargantuan modesty is of course not so sincere as that of Bach when he debased himself before the political bosses of his day, but Brahms actually felt uncertain about most of his works, and continually tried them out on his friends, particularly the adored Clara Schumann.

To another feminine confidante, Elisabeth von Herzogenberg, he wrote of this gay and sunny symphony, "The orchestra plays my new symphony with crepe bands on their sleeves, because of its dirgelike effect. It is to be printed with a black edge too." This seems like carrying a joke a bit too far.

The *Symphony in D major* shares its key with the *Violin Concerto* and the justly popular *Sapphische Ode* (*Sapphic Ode*) and all three of them draw their opening themes from the tones of the D-major chord. Brahms was far more inclined to get his melodies right out of harmony patterns than from the diatonic scale, which was the melodic source of most other composers, especially Beethoven.

The *Third Symphony* of Brahms, in F major, has as its motto the progression F, A-flat, F (an octave higher), representing the "*Frei aber froh*" with which its composer had improved on Joachim in his youth. Hans Richter and

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Hanslick both called this symphony the Brahms *Eroica*, although its second movement is distinctly pastoral in character. (They called the second his *Pastorale*.)

Kalbeck insists that Brahms got his inspiration for this *Third Symphony* from the statue of Germania near Rüdesheim. Joachim finds the story of Hero and Leander in its Finale, with the second theme suggesting a swimmer breasting the waves. Clara Schumann called the symphony a *Forest Idyl* and wrote out a program for it.

A reminiscence of the Venusberg music from *Tannhäuser* has been found, and this has been interpreted as a tribute to Wagner, who died during the composition of this symphony. The slow movement has reminded some people of the *Prayer* in Herold's *Zampa*. The third movement is definitely an echo of the *Romanze* in Schumann's D-minor symphony, which was later suggested again by César Franck in the Andante of his symphony in the same key.

The *Fourth Symphony* of Brahms was completed in the summer of 1885, and the manuscript was nearly destroyed by fire before it had been copied and produced. Luckily it was saved by neighbors, along with other belongings of the composer.

Brahms described this great work, in his usual self-belittling fashion, as "a couple of entr'actes," and also as "a choral piece without words." He was deeply disappointed and worried when he found that his friends did not like it at a first hearing. The public also was slow to recognize its value, although it was the occasion

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of one of his greatest ovations in Vienna when he heard it performed for the last time, in 1897. As Florence May described the scene: "A storm of applause broke out at the end of the first movement, not to be quieted until the composer, coming to the front of the artist's box in which he was seated, showed himself to the audience. The demonstration was renewed after the second and third movements, and an extraordinary scene followed the conclusion of the work. The applauding, shouting house, its gaze riveted on the figure standing in the balcony, so familiar, and yet in its present aspect so strange, seemed unable to let him go. Tears ran down his cheeks as he stood there, shrunken in form, with lined countenance, strained expression, white hair hanging lank; and throughout the audience there was a feeling as of a stifled sob, for each knew that they were saying farewell. Another outburst of applause and yet another; one more acknowledgment from the master; and Brahms and his Vienna had parted forever."

### OTHER WORKS OF BRAHMS

Concerning the smaller orchestral works of Brahms only a few facts need be noted. The popular *Variations on a Theme by Haydn* appeared also as a two-piano composition, and it was in this version that the composer first played it with Clara Schumann. The melody comes from a *Chorale St. Antoni*, which is part of a *Divertimento* that Haydn wrote for wind-instruments.

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The two famous *Overtures* were written in the summer of 1880, at Ischl, where Brahms spent some of his happiest days. The *Academic Festival Overture* had its inspiration in the awarding of a Ph.D. degree to Brahms by the University of Breslau and the composer himself described it as "a very jolly potpourri of students' songs à la Suppé." There are four of these melodies that stand out in the *Overture*. First comes Binzer's *Wir hatten gebauet ein stattliches Haus* (*We had built a stately house*) and then *Der Landesvater* in the second violins. Two bassoons introduce the familiar *Fuchslied* (*Freshman Song*) with comic effect. (The words begin, "*Was kommt dort von der Hoeh?*?" and the question is answered in various ways, bringing in the "Herr Papa," the "Frau Mama," and other members of the family, each described as "*ledern*," "leather"). For a climax Brahms uses the dignified melody of *Gaudemus Igitur*, known to college students the world over. The whole thing results in a doctoral thesis that can well be called unique.

The *Tragic Overture* has no such definite program, but its somber atmosphere fully justifies the title. Attempts have been made to identify some tragic hero in the music, with Hamlet and Faust among those mentioned. But Brahms made it fairly clear that he was expressing the spirit of Tragedy itself, and not limiting himself to any human being.

The two *Concertos* for piano and the tremendous *Violin Concerto* are practically orchestral works, of symphonic proportions. The first *Piano Concerto*, in D minor, included

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two movements of what was originally intended for an actual symphony (see p. 215). It was far from a success at first, and Brahms himself, writing to Joachim, called it "a brilliant and decided failure," but added, "In spite of all this, the concerto will please some day, when I have improved its construction."

Italy and Hungary entered into the inspiration for the second *Piano Concerto*, in B-flat, and its first performance was in Budapest, with the composer at the keyboard. Brahms had made some sketches during a holiday trip through Italy, in which he "mirrored the Italian spring turning to summer." The Finale is credited with Hungarian atmosphere, and the Scherzo may be the one which he originally wrote for the *Violin Concerto*, but omitted on the advice of Joachim.

This *Second Piano Concerto* is the more popular of the two, and contains distinct echoes of the Brahms songs, particularly in the slow melody, which is reminiscent of *Immer leiser wird mein Schlummer*. The rather ponderous modesty of Brahms appears again in Dr. Billroth's story of how he handed him the manuscript of this concerto with the words, "A few little piano pieces," adding, as usual, the request to "look at it and write me what you think of it." To his severest critic, Elisabeth von Herzogenberg, he described this as a "tiny, tiny concerto, with a tiny, tiny wisp of a Scherzo!"

The *Violin Concerto*, now recognized as perhaps the greatest of its kind, with only Beethoven's as a rival, had its first performance by Joachim, with Brahms conduct-

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ing. Joachim had made many suggestions to the composer, most of which were not accepted. It is said that the violinist did not play it particularly well at its Leipzig première, and the public did not show any great enthusiasm. There were other handicaps, for Brahms had changed his clothes so hastily that he appeared in gray trousers, without fastening his suspenders properly, so that in the excitement of his conducting, the trousers slipped down until an expanse of shirt-tail was revealed. "These laughter-provoking trifles were not calculated for elevation of mood," says a commentator, solemnly.

The Brahms-Joachim friendship was temporarily wrecked when the violinist was sued for divorce by his wife. Unfortunately a sympathetic letter written to her by Brahms was produced in court, and on the strength of his reputation she won her case. The two friends made up eventually, after Brahms had written his *Double Concerto* (for violin, cello, and orchestra) as a peace offering.

Brahms tore up at least six and possibly eight string quartets before he produced two that satisfied him (opus 51). His first *Trio*, for violin, cello, and piano, was completely rewritten thirty-seven years later. Some say that this was because one of the themes seemed too reminiscent of Schubert's *Am Meer*, but the fact is that Brahms was merely showing a correct appraisal of his early work and applying his customary self-criticism as honestly as possible.

He never worried unduly about originality, feeling that workmanship was fully as important as invention,

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and that real or fancied echoes could be found in almost any melody since the time of Haydn and Mozart. When someone pointed out to him that the opening of his *Violin Sonata in A* slightly suggested the *Prize Song* from Wagner's *Meistersinger*, he merely agreed that "any fool could tell that."

Brahms was always influenced in his composing by the resources of interpretation at his command. When he was directing a chorus, he immediately experimented with vocal writing in various ensemble forms. The fact that Clara Schumann was so often available to play duets with him probably caused him to put much of his instrumental music into that form, as in the case of the great *Quintet* for piano and strings, which he also wrote out for two pianos. His friendship with Stockhausen, a fine singer, led directly to a number of *Lieder*, and Joachim continually inspired him to compose for the violin.

When Brahms met Richard Mühlfeld, the greatest clarinet player of his time, he immediately wrote a *Trio* and a *Quintet* for him, and later added two *Sonatas* for clarinet and piano. He was so pleased with the virtuosity of this performer that he constantly referred to him as "Fräulein von Mühlfeld, meine Primadonna." Mühlfeld was employed by the Duke of Saxe-Meiningen, who is quoted as saying, "Whenever you wish for leave, and it is on Brahms' account, you may go without asking my permission."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Brahms dedicated to this Duke his *Gesang der Parzen* (*Song of the Fates*), which rather ironically belittles the possession of riches and their attendant pomp and ceremony. The text is from Goeth's *Iphigenia*.

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The most famous choral work of Brahms, his *German Requiem*, expressed his grief at the death of his mother. She was seventeen years older than his father, and they did not get on well, finally separating, but Brahms was exceedingly fond of them both. Another choral work, the *Triumphlied*, celebrated the German victories in the Franco-Prussian War. It was written with calm confidence, long before those victories were completed, and the dedication was to Wilhelm I of Prussia, soon to become the German Kaiser.

### THE SONG OF DESTINY

Brahms's friend Dietrich tells how the *Schicksalslied* (*Song of Destiny*) received its inspiration. They had gone to Wilhelmshaven together to see the naval port. Brahms was quiet and serious all day, and finally told Dietrich that early in the morning he had found a copy of Hölderlin's poems in the book-case, and had been deeply moved by the *Song of Destiny*. When they sat down on the beach to rest, Brahms moved off to a distance and began busily writing. These were the first sketches for the *Schicksalslied*. It was shortly completed for the Philharmonic Society of Carlsruhe.

It was Dietrich also who first knew of the *Liebeslieder*, written for a quartet of voices with four-handed piano accompaniment. Brahms wrote to him, "Some waltzes of mine will appear shortly, this time with vocal parts. Write to me how you like them." Of his *Alto Rhapsody*, set to words from Goethe's *Harzreise im Winter*, Brahms

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wrote Dietrich, "I am sending you my *Rhapsody*; the conductors will not exactly fight for the opus; but it will perhaps be a satisfaction to you to see that I do not always write in such a frivolous time as 3-4!"

Of his *Horn Trio*, Brahms told Dietrich that the opening theme came to him as a genuine inspiration while walking in the woods near Baden-Baden, when the rising sun suddenly peeped through the trees.

The late Josef Stransky told of walking in on Brahms one morning, and finding him in his typical *Schlafrock* (dressing-gown), smoking a long, black cigar. The composer greeted him with the announcement that he had "just finished a nice little song," went to the piano and played *Der Schmied*, (*The Blacksmith*) which became one of the most popular of his *Lieder*.

Such trivial anecdotes are cumulative in their gradual revelation of as endearing a personality as music has ever known. Brahms could be gruff and even rude, but his occasional bad manners were due to shyness rather than ill-nature. He was impatient of stupidity in any form, but fundamentally generous and kindly.<sup>1</sup>

His modesty was entirely sincere, and with all the praise that was heaped upon him from the outset of his career he remained honestly doubtful of the success of everything he wrote, criticizing his own work severely and asking for similar criticism from his friends. He was always embarrassed by praise. When an adoring lady

<sup>1</sup> Brahms was one of the few composers to make a good living from publication alone. He supported most of his relatives and gave away his money freely.

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asked him, "How do you manage to write such divine Adagios?" he replied, with mock seriousness, "Well, you know, my publishers order them that way."

On one occasion Joachim started to propose a toast to "the greatest composer," when Brahms quickly interrupted him with, "Quite right! Let's drink to the health of Mozart," and went about clinking glasses until his own eulogy was forgotten.

He greatly admired the waltzes of Johann Strauss, and often went to hear him conduct. In one of his own *Liebeslieder* he quotes a phrase from the *Beautiful Blue Danube*. These two diametrically different composers often met at Ischl and held long conversations together. Brahms once autographed a lady's fan by writing the opening notes of the *Blue Danube* and adding, "Unfortunately not by J. Brahms."

The Wagner-Brahms controversy was not a serious matter so far as the composers themselves were concerned. Hanslick, who at first failed to appreciate the younger man, eventually seized upon him as a weapon against Wagner, whom he hated (see p. 175). But there is proof that Brahms himself gave full credit to Wagner's genius, although he disapproved of him personally and went on record as favoring classic standards in preference to the "Music of the Future."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> When Wagner died, a wreath from Brahms was the first to arrive at Bayreuth. Its receipt was never acknowledged, and Cosima is quoted as saying, "Why should the wreath be acknowledged? I understand the man was no friend to Our Art."

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He wanted to go to the opening performance of *Parsifal*, but wrote to Bülow: "I need hardly say that I go in dread of the Wagnerians, who would spoil my pleasure in the best of Wagners. I don't know yet what I shall do. I may take advantage of my beard, which still allows me to trot about so nice and anonymous."

This famous beard, which is always associated with the face of Brahms, was a fairly late acquisition, dating from the year 1878, when he was already forty-five years old. He had tried it once before, but allowed his friends to dissuade him. This time he turned up with it in his native Hamburg, and he never shaved again. "A clean-shaven man is taken for an actor or a priest," was his complacent explanation.

Somehow one gets the feeling that Johannes Brahms must have been a grand person to know.

## XVII

### *The Troubles of Tschaikowsky*



PETER ILICH TSCHAIKOWSKY is one composer who can and does tell his own story. He tells it in letters and conversations with his brother Modeste and his nephew Vladimir Davidow; he tells it to his friend and employer Nicholas Rubinstein; he tells it in his highly personal diaries and notes; but most of all he tells it in the much discussed correspondence with his patroness, the widow Nadejda von Meck.

This estimable and highly practical woman did for Tschaikowsky what the "mad king" of Bavaria did for Wagner. She made it possible for him to compose music without wondering where his next meal was coming from. And her motives, like those of Ludwig, were of the best.

In all the history of art there is no record of another affair like this. Mme. von Meck and the composer never met. They saw each other only once, on the street, in

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passing. But they kept up a heavy exchange of letters over a period of thirteen years, during which the wealthy widow practically supported Tschaikowsky. Without her money, he could never have produced the music that he did between the years 1877 and 1890.

Born in 1840, Tschaikowsky had studied the law and begun to make a living as a clerk, with music merely an avocation. When Anton Rubinstein opened a Conservatory of Music in St. Petersburg, Tschaikowsky became his pupil, but he was twenty-five years old when he graduated. Anton's brother Nicholas then offered him a position as teacher of harmony in his own new Conservatory at Moscow, at thirty dollars a month. He accepted and became a professional musician.

For a dozen years he managed to live on the income from his teaching, some critical writing, and such composing as he found time to do. He even managed to fall in love with an operatic star, Désirée Artôt, who permitted him to assume an engagement, but shortly married a baritone named Padilla. That he should have created such works as the *Romeo and Juliet Overture* and the *Piano Concerto in B-flat minor* during those lean and melancholy years is remarkable.

It was probably Nicholas Rubinstein who first interested the widow von Meck in Tschaikowsky's music. Certainly it was the music rather than the man that appealed to her. She had been happily married to an engineer and was the mother of eleven children. She was nine years older than Tschaikowsky.

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Their acquaintance began with several small commissions, for which she paid him obviously exaggerated prices, as he was well aware. Then, hearing that he was in debt, she sent him a gift of 3,000 rubles. Eventually she settled upon him an annual income of 6,000 rubles, on which he could live comfortably. But she insisted that they should never meet. Under the circumstances, the letters on both sides are extreme in their mutual ardor.

The immediate result of her patronage was Tschaikowsky's *Fourth Symphony*, the first in the series that could be called really significant. As early as May, 1877, he had decided to dedicate this symphony to Mme. von Meck. "I believe that you will find in it echoes of your deepest thoughts and feelings," he wrote. "At this moment any other work would be odious to me. . . . I am in a very nervous, worried, and irritable state, highly unfavorable to composition, and even my symphony suffers in consequence." (That state was to become more and more his normal condition.)

Strangely enough, during the summer of that year, Tschaikowsky allowed himself to be dragged into a marriage with a certain Antonina Miliukova, a passionate admirer who was obviously unfitted for a relationship which could only end in speedy separation. But even this brief experience brought its victim to the verge of a complete collapse.

After confessing his mistake to his patroness, he began to write again of "our symphony": "I hope it will please you, for that is the main thing."

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A letter of August, 1877, refers to details of the symphony: "There will be a new effect of sound in the Scherzo, and I expect much from it. At first the strings play alone and pizzicato throughout. In the Trio the wood-wind instruments enter and play alone. At the end all three choirs toss short phrases to each other. I believe that the effects of sound and color will be most interesting."

By December, with his marriage now only a bad dream, and with material comfort assured for the future, Tschaikowsky could write sincerely: "No one of my orchestral pieces has cost me so much labor, but on no one have I worked with so much love and with such devotion. At first I was led on only by the wish to bring the symphony to an end, and then I grew more and more fond of the task, and now I cannot bear to leave it. My dear Nadejda Filaretovna, perhaps I am mistaken, but it seems to me that this symphony is no mediocre piece; that it is the best I have yet made. How glad I am that it is *our* work, and that you will know when you hear it how much I thought about you in every measure! If you were not, would it ever have been finished? When I was in Moscow and thought that my end was about to come, I wrote on the first draft, 'If I should die, please send this manuscript to N. F. von Meck.' I wished the manuscript of my last composition to be in your possession. Now I am not only well, but, thanks to you, in the position to give myself wholly to work, and I believe I have written music which cannot fall into oblivion. Yet it is possible

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that I am wrong; it is the peculiar habit of all artists to wax enthusiastic over the youngest of their productions.” (This letter was written from Venice.)

By February, 1878, he is writing from Florence: “How much happiness your letter has brought me today, dear Nadejda Filaretovna! I am delighted beyond measure to learn that the symphony has pleased you, that in hearing it you have also experienced the feelings which animated me during the task, and that you have opened your heart to my music. You ask if during the composition of this symphony any definite program was in my mind. To such a question I am accustomed to answer negatively. As a matter of fact, it is very difficult to give an answer. How can one describe those indefinite sentiments which fill one during the composition of an untitled instrumental work? It is a purely lyrical process. It is the musical confession of the soul, in which much material has accumulated, which now flows forth in tones, just as a lyric poet expresses himself in verses. The difference lies only therein that music disposes of incomparably richer means, and is a more subtle language for the expression of the thousandfold different moments in the moods of the soul.”

### CONFESIONS OF A GENIUS

Tschaikowsky thereupon proceeds to give a practically unique explanation of the workings of genius, as well as a detailed program of the sort that few composers would be willing to confess: “Generally, the germ of the work

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appears with lightning suddenness, quite unexpectedly. If this germ falls on fertile soil—that is to say, when the desire to work is felt—it takes root with incredible strength and rapidity, shoots up from the ground, displays branches, twigs, leaves, and finally blossoms. I cannot describe the process of creation otherwise than by this comparison. The greatest difficulty lies in the necessity that the germ should appear under favorable circumstances; then everything will proceed of its own accord.

"It would be in vain for me to endeavor to express in words that immeasurable sense of happiness which comes over me when a new thought appears and begins to grow into definite forms. I then forget everything, and behave as if I were mad; all in me pulsates and vibrates; scarcely have I begun the sketches when thousands of details are chasing each other through my brain.

"In the midst of this magic process it sometimes happens that some shock from without tears me from my somnambulism—as, for instance, if someone suddenly rings, or if a servant enters the room, or if the clock strikes and reminds me that it is time to stop. . . . Such disturbances are absolutely terrible! Sometimes they frighten inspiration away for a time, and I must seek for it again, often in vain. In that case, cold reason and technical resources have to be called in to assist.

"Often with the greatest masters there have been moments when the organic thread failed them and artistic craftsmanship took its place, so that parts of a whole

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appear to be glued together. But that is unavoidable. If that mood of an artist's soul which is called inspiration, and which I have tried to describe, were to last without interruption for any time, one could not survive it a single day. The strings would break and the instrument fall into a thousand pieces. It is already a good thing if the principal ideas and the general design of the composition are not arrived at by searching, but appear of their own accord under the influence of that supernatural, indescribable power which is called inspiration.

"However, I have strayed from the point. For our symphony there is a program, or rather there is a possibility to describe its purport in words, and to you alone I will communicate the meaning of the whole work and of its separate sections. Naturally, I can only do it on broad, general lines.

"The introduction is the germ of the entire symphony. That is Fate, that tragic power which prevents the yearning for happiness from reaching its goal, which jealously strives that happiness and peace shall not obtain the mastery, that the heavens shall not be free from clouds,—a power which constantly hangs over us like the sword of Damocles, and ceaselessly poisons the soul. This power is overwhelming and invincible. Nothing remains but to submit and lament in vain.

"The feeling of depression and hopeless despair grows in strength and heat. Is it not better to turn away from reality and lull oneself in dreams?

"Oh, joy! What a sweet vision has appeared! A radiant human being full of promise of bliss beckons to me.

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"How beautiful is Hope! The insistent first motive of the Allegro sounds now from a great distance. Little by little the soul is woven round with dreams. All that was dark, all that was joyless is now forgotten. Joy! Joy!! Joy!!! But no; these are but dreams, Fate scatters them once more.

"Thus our whole life alternates between grim reality and fluttering dreams of happiness. There is no safe haven. You are thrown hither and thither by the waves until the sea swallows you. That would be about the program for the first movement.

"The second movement shows suffering in another phase. It is that melancholy feeling which broods over us as we sit at home alone, exhausted by work. The book which we have picked up to read slips from our hands, and a host of recollections arise. How sad that so many things have been and are past, but yet it is pleasant to think of one's youth. One regrets the past, and has not the courage or the desire to begin a new life. One is somewhat tired of life, one would like to refresh oneself and look back, awakening many memories. One thinks of joyful hours, when the young blood still rushed and glowed, and there was satisfaction in love. One thinks also of sorrowful moments, of irreparable losses, but all that is so far, so far away. It is bitter, yet it is so sweet, to dive into the past.

"In the third movement no definite feelings find expression. These are but capricious arabesques, elusive figures which flit past the imagination when one has drunk a little wine, and feels exuberant. The mood is neither sad

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nor merry. One thinks of nothing. One gives free rein to the imagination, and phantasy draws the most wonderful designs. Suddenly comes the memory of a tipsy peasant and a song of the gutter. . . . In the distance one hears military music passing. These are just the incoherent pictures which, as we fall asleep, suddenly float before our fancy and rapidly vanish. With reality they have nothing to do; they are incomprehensible, bizarre, and disjointed.

"Fourth movement: If you have no joy in yourself, look around you. Go to the people. See how they know to be merry, and how heartily they yield to their happy feelings. The picture of a popular merrymaking. Scarce have you forgotten your sorrow, scarce have you had time to become engrossed in the sight of the joys of others, when untiring Fate once more announces its presence. The people do not trouble about you. They do not look at you; they do not notice that you are alone and sorrowful. Oh, how happy they are! And you would affirm that all in the world is somber and joyless! There is still happiness, simple, primitive happiness. Rejoice in the joy of others and—you can still live."

### TSCHAIKOWSKY IN A NUTSHELL

This is not merely an astonishing revelation of the actual workings of a composer's mind. It is far more than an intimate confession of how genius really becomes aware of inspiration and arrives at a complete work of

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art. It is, in effect, an apology and an explanation of Tschaikowsky's whole miserable life, with its pessimistic doubts, its melancholy, introspective broodings, its persistent self-pity, indecision, morbid hypochondria, shy timidity, and vague yearning. No other artist has given himself away so completely.

Tschaikowsky probably thought it unnecessary to tell Nadejda that the main theme of his Finale in this fourth symphony was the familiar Russian folk-song, *The Birch Tree* whose apparently lighthearted words are a terrific indictment of the drunkenness that enslaved so much of the peasant population. He also neglected to mention that the opening of this same Finale, coming right down the scale, is identical with the start of Handel's hymntune, *Joy to the World*, which, however, may be an entirely accidental parallel. In his dedication he referred to Mme. von Meck as "My Best Friend."

Tschaikowsky's next symphony, the fifth, in E minor, was not written until eleven years later. The strange, Platonic love affair still had two years to run, and Nadejda von Meck was still his chief confidante.

In June of 1888 he wrote to her, "I am exceedingly anxious to prove to myself, as to others, that I am not played out as a composer. . . . Have I told you that I intend to write a symphony? The beginning was difficult; but now inspiration seems to have come. However, we shall see."

By August she hears, "I have orchestrated half the symphony. My age—although I am not very old—

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begins to tell on me." (He was forty-eight at the time.) Later in the same month: "I am not feeling well, . . . but I am so glad that I have finished the symphony that I forget my physical troubles."

He conducted the first performance at St. Petersburg in November. By December he was writing Nadejda; "After two performances of my new symphony in St. Petersburg and one in Prague, I have come to the conclusion that it is a failure. There is something repellent, something superfluous, patchy, and insincere, which the public instinctively recognizes. . . . The consciousness of this brings me a sharp twinge of self-dissatisfaction. Am I really played out, as they say? Can I merely repeat and ring the changes on my earlier idiom? Last night I looked through *our* symphony. What a difference! How immeasurably superior it is! It is very, very sad."

He got over this pessimism in time, however, and his brother Modeste has suggested that it was Tschaikowsky's conducting that handicapped the fifth symphony in its early days. In any case, it eventually arrived at success.

There must have been a program in the composer's mind, but he never wrote it down. Perhaps he was expressing again the struggle against Fate. The "motto" which appears first in minor key, becomes a triumphant march theme in the major Finale. The charming slow movement has been much used as a vocal melody, as in the play, *The Song of Songs*. There is an individual touch in the substitution of a waltz for the conventional Scherzo.

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Tschaikowsky's last symphony was the *Pathétique*, in B minor, which is definitely associated with his death. The patronage of the widow von Meck had suddenly stopped in the year 1890, when she ran into financial troubles. He deeply resented her implication that, without the annual allowance, her friendship would no longer be of interest to him, for by this time he was not only capable of supporting himself by his music (he had been offered \$25,000 for an American tour, which he eventually made in 1891), but his unseen correspondent had become a very necessary part of his life. The sadness created by this final misunderstanding, and the premonition of approaching death, can both be found in the melancholy of this most popular of the Tschaikowsky symphonies.

To his brother Anatol the composer writes in February, 1893: "I am now wholly occupied with the new work [a symphony] and it is hard for me to tear myself away from it. I believe it comes into being as the best of my works. . . . I told you that I had completed a symphony which suddenly displeased me, and I tore it up. Now I have composed a new symphony *which I certainly shall not tear up.*"

In August Modeste heard from his brother that "the orchestration is the more difficult, the farther I go. Twenty years ago I let myself write at ease, without much thought, and it was all right. Now I have become cowardly and uncertain. . . . In spite of this, I make progress."

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During the same month, Tschaikowsky's nephew Davidow, to whom he eventually dedicated the symphony, received these comments: "I am very well satisfied with the contents, but not wholly with the orchestration. I do not succeed in my intentions. It will not surprise me in the least if the symphony is cursed or judged unfavorably; 'twill not be for the first time. I myself consider it the best, especially the most open-hearted of all my works. I love it as I have never loved any other of my musical creations." To his publisher, Jurgenson, he wrote, "I give you my word of honor that never in my life have I been so contented, so proud, so happy, in the knowledge that I have written a good piece."

When he rehearsed it in St. Petersburg, he was disappointed at the reaction of the orchestral players, on whose enthusiasm he had counted strongly. Again his conducting may have been a handicap, for the first performance made no great impression on the public or the critics. Later, under other conductors, it became a sensational success, with a world-wide popularity that still persists.

The title was supplied by brother Modeste. Tschaikowsky had called it a *Program Symphony*, but reconsidered this when he was about to send it to the publishers. "What does *Program Symphony* mean when I will give it no program?" he said to his brother. Modeste thought of the word *Tragic*, but this also did not suit the composer.

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"I left the room before he had come to a decision," writes Modeste. "Suddenly I thought *Pathétique*. I went back to the room—I remember it as though it were yesterday—and I said the word to Peter. 'Splendid, Modi, bravo! *Pathétique!*' and he wrote in my presence the title that will forever remain."

A little over a week later Tschaikowsky was dead, without ever realizing how his favorite composition was to be acclaimed. Some say that he committed suicide, either by taking poison or by deliberately inviting cholera through drinking water that had not been boiled. His illness was brief, and in his delirium he often spoke reproachfully of Nadejda von Meck. It was a pathetic end to a pathetic life.

### OTHER SYMPHONIC WORKS

The earlier symphonies of Tschaikowsky are without much interest in either their history or their content. The first, in G minor, was called *Winter Day-dreams*, and dates back to his early days at the Moscow Conservatory. Two of the movements have individual titles, *Dreams of a Winter Journey* and *Rugged Country Cloudland*.

The second symphony, in C minor, written soon after the first, shows Tschaikowsky's greatest interest in Russian folk-music, and its definite suggestion of Ukrainian melodies has given it the title of *Little-Russian Symphony*. This is one of the few occasions when the composer indicated any sympathy with the efforts of the famous

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"five," Balakirew, Borodin, Cui, Moussorgsky, and Rimsky-Korsakoff, to revive the spirit and materials of Russia's national music.

The third symphony, in D, has been called *Polish*, with an attempt to give it a program representing "Poland mourning in her oppression and rejoicing in her regeneration." Outside of some Polish rhythms, there is no real reason for this interpretation.

Tschaikowsky also wrote an unnumbered "program symphony" which he called *Manfred*, whose general idea and specific outline were supplied by Balakirew. This program might almost have been Tschaikowsky's own, and except for reversing the two middle sections, he followed it closely.

In the first movement, "Manfred wanders over the Alps. His life is ruined; many burning questions remain unanswered; nothing remains to him but memory. The form of the ideal Astarte floats before his fancy; in vain he calls to her; only the echoes of the rocks give back her name. His thoughts and memories burn his brain and eat out his heart; he seeks and pleads for oblivion which none can give him."

For the second movement Balakirew suggested "the customs of the Alpine huntsmen, patriarchal, simple, and kindly." "Naturally," he added, "you must first of all have a little hunting-motive, only here the greatest caution is necessary so as not to fall into triviality. Heaven preserve you from commonplaces after the manner of German fanfares and hunting-music!"

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In the third movement (placed second by Tschaikowsky), "the spirit of the Alps appears to Manfred in the rainbow of the waterfall." The Finale is "a wild Allegro which depicts the caves of Arimanes, to which Manfred has gone in order to seek a meeting with Astarte. The contrast to this infernal orgy will be given by the appearance of Astarte's shade. The music must be light, clear, ideal, and maidenly. Then a repetition of the pandemonium, then sunset and the death of Manfred."

Balakirew was almost equally responsible for Tschai-kowsky's first important work, the *Romeo and Juliet Overture Fantasia*, which remains among his greatest and most attractive. The older composer not only suggested the subject, but supervised every step of the composition, from its first fragmentary sketches. His instructions in one letter included the advice to put on his rubbers, take a stick, and go for a walk on the Boulevards, starting from Nikitsky. "Let yourself become permeated with the subject, and I am sure by the time you reach Sretensky you will have found some theme or episode."

The piece was subjected to endless revision, even after its first performance under the baton of Nicholas Rubinstein. Its themes clearly portray the battles of the Montagues and the Capulets, the religious devotion of Friar Laurence, and the well-known love scenes. Tschai-kowsky at one time planned to make an opera out of *Romeo and Juliet*, and actually left a duet for soprano and tenor, with words from the second balcony scene,

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using the two beautiful love melodies from the *Overture Fantasia*. This duet was orchestrated by Taneieff and published posthumously.

A similar and equally successful piece of program music has the title *Francesca da Rimini*, and gives a musical picture of the scene from Dante, the lost souls wandering disconsolately about, and the whirlwind noises of the Inferno. Tschaikowsky also wrote orchestral fantasias (or symphonic poems) on *The Tempest*, *Hamlet*, *The Voyevode* and *Fate*. His *Overture 1812* is said to have been written for the consecration of the Temple of Christ in Moscow, to be performed outdoors, with actual artillery in the battle scene. Musically it borrows the melodies of the Russian hymn, *God Preserve Thy People*, a folk-tune of Novgorod (also used by Rimsky-Korsakoff), the *Marseillaise*, and the Czarist *National Anthem*. The conflict between the French and Russian airs may represent the battle of Borodino, but actually the Czarist hymn was not written until 1863, and the *Marseillaise* can hardly have been popular with the Grande Armée in 1812.

The *Italian Capriccio* is an effective orchestration of tunes that Tschaikowsky picked up in Italy, where he had fled for his health after his unfortunate marriage. The popular *Marche Slav* again uses the *Russian National Anthem*, and also borrows folk-melodies of Slavonic and possibly Serbian origin. The five-tone minor pattern, appearing most prominently in this march, was also imitated by César Cui in his *Orientale*.

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Tschaikowsky's first *String Quartet*, containing the popular *Andante Cantabile*, owed its origin to the fact that he could not afford to hire an orchestra for a benefit concert of his own compositions when he was going through his years of poverty. Four instruments had to suffice, so he wrote his quartet especially for the occasion. The familiar slow theme is from a folk-tune, and contains in its third phrase a suggestion of the *Volga Boat Song*.

The composer did not care for the combination of piano, violin, and cello, but wrote one highly successful *Trio* on the insistence of Mme. von Meck, dedicating it "to the memory of a great artist" (Nicholas Rubinstein, who died in 1881).

### THE PIANO CONCERTO

Rubinstein's helpful friendship failed him only once, and that was in connection with the *Piano Concerto in B-flat minor*, concerning which his advice was asked. Tschaikowsky describes how Nicholas listened in silence to the entire composition, now one of the most popular of its kind. "Then sprang forth a vigorous stream of words from Rubinstein's mouth. At first he spoke quietly, but by degrees his passion rose, and finally he resembled Zeus hurling thunderbolts. It appeared that my concerto was worthless and absolutely unplayable, that the passages were manufactured and withal so clumsy as to be beyond correction, that the composition itself was bad, trivial, and commonplace, that I had stolen this point from somebody, and that one from somebody else, and

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that only two or three pages had any value, and all the rest should be either destroyed or entirely remodeled. . . . I cannot reproduce, what was the worst, the accent and the voice with which Nikolai Gregorievich said all this. In short, an unbiased spectator of the scene could only have thought that I was a stupid, untalented, and conceited spoiler of music paper, who had had the impertinence to show his rubbish to a celebrated man."

Tschaikowsky refused to make any changes, and dedicated the concerto to Hans von Bülow, who praised it enthusiastically and played it with complete success. Rubinstein later admitted his error and apologized. The skipping subject of the first movement was taken from a folk-tune that the composer had heard sung by a blind beggar at a fair. His brother Modeste also mentions a French chansonette, which he and Anatol had whistled about the house, of which there is an unconscious reminiscence in the second movement.

The similarly popular *Violin Concerto* also suffered at first from severe criticism. Leopold Auer, to whom it was originally dedicated, refused to play it, as too difficult, and it was introduced by Brodsky in Vienna. There Hanslick attacked it with a violence that was positively obscene: "The violin is no longer played; it is yanked about, it is torn asunder, it is beaten black and blue. . . . We see wild and vulgar faces, we hear curses, we smell bad brandy. Friedrich Vischer once asserted in reference to lascivious painting that there are pictures which 'stink in the eye.' Tschaikowsky's *Violin Concerto*

Peter Ilich Tschaikowsky

brings to us for the first time the horrid idea that there may be music that stinks in the ear."

Tschaikowsky wrote several ballets, of which the first and second, *The Lake of Swans* and *The Sleeping Beauty*, are still in the repertoire of all Russian toe-dancers. The third, *Casse Noisette*, is most familiar in its purely orchestral form as the beloved *Nutcracker Suite*. Written in 1891, this delightful fairy-tale music gave its composer the usual pessimistic doubts. He wrote to his nephew: "I bragged to you when you were here that I could finish the ballet in about five days. But I have scarcely finished it in a fortnight. No, the old man is breaking up . . . he loses bit by bit the capacity to do anything at all. The ballet is infinitely worse than the *Sleeping Beauty*. . . . If I arrive at the conclusion that I can no longer furnish my musical table with anything but warmed-up fare, I will give up composing altogether."

The subject matter of the *Nutcracker Suite* was taken from Dumas's version of a fairy-story by E. T. A. Hoffmann. It deals with a little girl who has received a nutcracker for Christmas and then dreams of seeing the battle between the mice and the toys, led by Nutcracker himself, who eventually turns into a handsome prince. He takes her to the jam mountain, where the Sugarplum Fairy welcomes her and entertains her with dances by the various sweets, toys, etc. The popular *Waltz of the Flowers* is the concluding number.

"To refrain from writing operas," said Tschaikowsky, "is the act of a hero, and we have only one such hero in

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our time—Brahms. Such heroism is not for me. The stage, with all its glitter, attracts me irresistibly." He wrote several operas, of which *Eugene Onegin* and *Pique Dame* proved most successful. The subject of the former was suggested by Mme. Lavrovskaya, a singer and teacher, and the libretto was made by Shilovsky, from Pushkin's story. The same author provided the material for *Pique Dame*, but his brother Modeste wrote this libretto.

Outside of Russia, however, Tschaikowsky remains primarily a symphonic composer. He has told his own story, sentimentally, exhaustively, self-consciously; but in the long run his music tells it far better. For with all its morbid introspection, its incoherent longing for the unattainable, it has its full share of immortal beauty and that quality of inspiration which is indefinable.

## XVIII

### *Odds and Ends*



THE composers whose stories have been told thus far may be considered those who produced the largest volume of great music, besides living on the whole the most interesting lives. But there are many others who either created a few works of real significance or offer some unusual biographical material in connection with less important compositions.

They deserve at least a passing mention, even though their stories appear in a rather disjointed fashion. There can be little more than a slight attempt to maintain some national and chronological order.

Of the lesser composers of Germany, which has contributed so many of the giants, three sons of Johann Sebastian Bach are remembered, and all three are entirely different from each other and from their unique father. The eldest, Wilhelm Friedemann Bach, was unquestionably the most talented of them all, but he wasted his

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substance in riotous living. Known as the "Halle Bach," because of his position there as organist, he drifted gradually into complete degradation and died in poverty. He was considered the finest organ player of his day, but seldom wrote down his music, being content with improvisation.

Less gifted, but far more important in the history of music, was the third son, Karl Philipp Emanuel Bach, who, curiously, started his career as a student of law. He was a splendid clavier player and wrote a significant method for the instrument, of which the principles definitely paved the way to modern pianistic art. He served the Crown Prince of Prussia as court-musician, and later succeeded Telemann in Hamburg, wherefor he is known both as the "Berlin Bach" and the "Hamburg Bach." His experiments with sonata form led directly to the symphonies and chamber music of Haydn, and he might well be called "the grandfather of the symphony," if Haydn was its father.

Johann Christian Bach was the eleventh son of the great cantor, and is generally called the "English Bach." He was only fourteen when his father died and left him three harpsichords. He studied piano and composition with his brother Emanuel in Berlin, but soon turned to singing, which he learned from Padre Martini in Milan, where he was also organist at the cathedral (hence also "the Milanese Bach"). His career then became primarily operatic, and he spent the rest of his life in London, first as a composer and then as an impresario.

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Of other minor German composers there is not much to be said. Haydn's younger brother, Michael, was considered by far the better singer of the two, when they were both choristers at St. Stephen's in Vienna. He was an excellent composer and might have had a position with Prince Esterhazy at Eisenstadt, but rejected the opportunity because he had hopes of something better at Salzburg. As a result he got neither. Joseph Haydn considered him undiplomatic and said, "Ours is a court life, but a very different one from yours at Salzburg; it is uncommonly hard to do what you want."

Carl Zelter had the doubtful distinction of being preferred by Goethe to either Beethoven or Weber, but he also taught and encouraged Mendelssohn, and was largely responsible for the revival of Bach. He bought a manuscript of the *St. Matthew Passion* as waste paper at the auction of a deceased cheesemonger's goods, and this eventually came into Mendelssohn's hands. Zelter actually "revised" some of the vocal parts, but his pupil eliminated these changes before the work was published or performed.

Ludwig Spohr was a highly respected violinist and composer in his time, but practically all his music is forgotten today. He lives as the interpreter of Beethoven's early quartets and as a peculiarly dense critic of his later and greater works. He called the Finale of the *Fifth Symphony* "unmeaning noise" and the choral movement of the *Ninth* "monstrous and tasteless," with a "trivial conception" of Schiller's *Ode to Joy*. He summed

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it up by calling Beethoven "wanting in aesthetic culture and sense of beauty." Yet Spohr was the first prominent musician to recognize the genius of Wagner.

Joachim Raff is another musician once highly respected but now practically forgotten, except for the sentimental *Cavatina*, which amateur fiddlers still love to play, with its sonorous G-string melody and easy double-stops. Raff's symphonies were once taken very seriously, and the march melody from the *Lenore* figured prominently in a musical novel called *The First Violin*. The only one heard today is *Im Walde (In the Forest)*.

In Robert Franz, however, Germany produced a songwriter who stands close to Schubert, Schumann, and Brahms. His real name was Knauth, which he wisely dropped in favor of the first two. Franz belongs in the honorable list of the Schumann discoveries. Unfortunately he developed deafness early in life, and this eventually wrecked his musical career. In his final years he was generously assisted by the benefit concerts of Liszt, Joachim, and others.

Carl Goldmark, an uncle of the late American composer, Rubin Goldmark; lives in his *Rustic Wedding Symphony*, his *Sakuntala Overture*, and the operas, *The Queen of Sheba* and *The Cricket on the Hearth*, the latter obviously based on the Dickens story, an unusual source for such material. It is said that in his youth, while playing in a theater orchestra, he was mistaken for a rebel, and led out to be shot. Luckily someone rectified the error in time.

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Two of the least appreciated symphonists today are Anton Bruckner and Gustav Mahler, for whom a special society is now making active propaganda. Mahler, once a conductor of the Metropolitan Opera and the Philharmonic Orchestra in New York, completed nine symphonies, several of which are programmatic. The fifth is known as *The Giant*, and the eighth as the *Symphony of a Thousand*, because it requires a chorus of that size to do it justice. This enormous work contains the Latin hymn, *Veni Creator Spiritus*, and choral scenes from *Faust*. Mahler, incidentally, vehemently opposed annotated programs!

### BRUCKNER'S TROUBLES

Bruckner is the more endearing character, with a naïve peasant background that made his scholarly attainments all the more remarkable. He had the misfortune to be used by the Wagnerites as an opponent for Brahms, and thereby won the hostility of Hanslick, than which there was nothing more unpleasant in the history of journalism. The Adagio of his *Seventh Symphony*, perhaps his finest music, represented a premonition of the death of Wagner and was later considered a dirge in the Bayreuth master's memory. Bruckner says, "At one time I came home and was very sad. I thought to myself, it is impossible that the Master can live for a long time, and then the Adagio in C-sharp minor came into my head." More amusingly naïve is the story of his receiving a decoration from the Emperor Franz Joseph, who asked

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if there were anything else he could do for him. "Yes," answered Bruckner. "Won't you please ask Mr. Hanslick not to write such nasty criticisms of my symphonies?"

Max Bruch, composer of two popular *Violin Concertos*, is perhaps more important as a choral writer. His cantata, *Schön Ellen*, is based on a story invented by a newspaper correspondent, to the effect that during the siege of Lucknow a Scotch girl named Jessie Brown heard the bagpipes of the relief troops long before they were audible to the rest of the garrison, and thus prevented a surrender to the Sepoys. The Scotch tune, *The Campbells are Coming*, runs through the entire cantata.

Engelbert Humperdinck, who, as a young man, assisted Wagner in the production of *Parsifal* at Bayreuth, composed his ever popular *Hänsel und Gretel* first as a Christmas celebration for the children of his sister, Mrs. Adelheid Wette, who wrote the words. It proved so successful that they later enlarged the musical fairy-tale into a complete opera.

The three Strauss boys from Vienna, Johann, Joseph, and Eduard, had a composer for a father, who was determined that none of them should follow in his footsteps. The first became a bank clerk and the second an architect. The third was still a schoolboy when the father died, and therefore developed into a musician, which the others already were by nature and secret training. The story presented by the modern play, *The Great Waltz*, exaggerates the hostility between the elder and the younger Johann Strauss, each of whom was

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known as "the Waltz King." The son grew up to wear fierce mustaches and beat time heavily as he played or conducted, and also to write such masterpieces as the *Beautiful Blue Danube*, *Tales from the Vienna Woods*, *Artist's Life*, and the operetta *Die Fledermaus (The Bat)*.

The modern Richard Strauss is not related to this family, coming from Munich. His *Heldenleben (A Hero's Life)* has been considered autobiographical, and his *Sinfonia Domestica* clearly depicts a typical day of family life, including a realistic musical bath for the baby. On a trip to America, Strauss declared that one of his most beautiful songs, *Traum durch die Dämmerung (Dream through the Twilight)*, was composed while waiting for his wife to put on her hat. Less pleasant is the story that he had a peasant girl tied to a stake and tormented by children so that he could imitate her yells in the music of his *Elektra*.

Anton Dvořák is of interest to Americans chiefly because of his symphony, *From the New World*, which he wrote while in this country from 1892 to 1893. Back in Berlin, in 1900, he wrote to a conductor to "omit that nonsense about my having made use of 'Indian' and 'American' themes; that is a lie. I tried only to write in the spirit of those national American melodies." Yet there is a distinct suggestion of the negro spiritual, *Swing Low, Sweet Chariot*, in the first movement (which is curiously paralleled by an old slave-song, of secular character). The famous *Largo*, originally called *Legenda*, has no negro background, although it is often considered

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an actual spiritual because of William Arms Fisher's words, *Goin' Home*. Dvorak also wrote an *American Quartet*, which contains negro materials.

America's own Edward Macdowell made excellent use of primitive melodies in his orchestral suite in E minor, known as *Indian*. It was composed shortly before the Dvořák symphony, and includes in its five movements a *Legend*, composed of Iroquois and Chippewa themes, an Iowa love song, a war dance of the Dakotas, a *Kiowa* or *Dirge*, and a *Village Festival*, containing Iroquois songs and dances. In general, however, Macdowell's music is Celtic rather than American. His *Scotch Poem* is among his most popular piano pieces, and another, known as *Song* (one of the *Sea Pieces*), is definitely built on the Scotch five-tone scale.

### ITALIAN OPERATIC COMPOSERS

Going back to the early days, one finds the pioneer of French opera, Jean Baptiste Lully, actually an Italian by birth. He was brought to Paris at the age of twelve by the Chevalier de Guise, who found him singing popular songs to his own guitar accompaniment. The Chevalier gave him as a household servant to Mlle. de Montpensier, granddaughter of Henri IV. He grew tired of kitchen work, set music to some scurrilous verses about his mistress, and was dismissed, to the great advantage of his subsequent career. He became a favorite of Louis XIV and wrote many operas and ballets for the court.

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Lully is often credited with the music of the "folk-song," *Au Clair de la Lune*.

Of actual Italian composers, Claudio Monteverde may be called "the first modernist," although he lived in the sixteenth century. He broke away from the restrictions of ecclesiastical music, and substituted melody with accompaniment for the earlier polyphonic style. A chord in his opera *Arianna* (*Lascatemi morire*) is considered the first legitimate use of dissonance in the history of music.

The two Scarlattis are also of great importance in Italy's musical development. Alessandro, the father, did much for the improvement of opera, although he is sometimes accused of yielding to the temptation of giving the singers too much freedom for display. In his perfection of style and form, Alessandro Scarlatti was the logical forerunner of Mozart. There is a story that when Hasse tried to introduce Quantz, the flute player, to the old man, he said "My son, you know that I cannot endure players of wind-instruments, for they all blow out of tune."

Scarlatti's son, Domenico, has already been mentioned in connection with Handel (p. 31). He was not only a virtuoso on keyboard instruments, but a composer of significance, including operas and short pieces for the harpsichord. His son Giuseppe also composed operas, making the third Scarlatti in a direct line to produce such music.

An exciting character in the history of Italian opera is Giovanni Battista Pergolesi, whose *La Serva Padrona*

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(*The Maid as Mistress*) is still performed. He led a wild life and died earlier than any other great musician, at the age of only twenty-six (of consumption). One of the absurd stories about Pergolesi is that a certain Maria Spinelli was in love with him, whereupon her brothers threatened to kill the composer unless she chose within three days a husband who was her equal in birth. She took the veil by preference, stipulating that Pergolesi should conduct the Mass, and died a year after entering the convent, to be followed shortly by her lover. Pergolesi has been credited with the song, *Tre Giorni son che Nina*, but it is now fairly certain that it was actually written by another composer, Vincenzo Ciampi.

For a man who is remembered today only by a *Minuet*, Luigi Boccherini turned out a tremendous volume of chamber music. He was contemporary with Haydn, and the two must have known each other fairly well and evidently with mutual admiration. The violinist Puppo referred to Boccherini as "the wife of Haydn," implying a somewhat less robust and masculine style of composition.

Domenico Cimarosa represents the climax of genuine Italian opera, although his works are now forgotten, except for *Il Matrimonio Segreto* (*The Secret Marriage*). This opera was written in Vienna, for Leopold II, and made such an impression at its first performance that the Emperor had supper served for all the participants and then commanded an immediate repetition of the entire work. Cimarosa's end was tragic. He was accused of

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rebellion in his native Naples, imprisoned, and condemned to death. Eventually his life was spared, but he was banished from Naples and died in Venice, leaving a half-finished opera, *Artemisia*, which he was writing for the Carnival.

Another once-famous name, now almost forgotten, is that of Gasparo Luigi Pacifico Spontini (not easy to remember, after all). A one-act opera of his, called *Milton*, shows the influence of Mozart, although the Austrian would hardly have picked such a subject. Spontini dedicated the score to the Empress Josephine, who made him her "Compositeur particulier." His most important work, revived not so long ago at the Metropolitan, is *La Vestale*, whose libretto, by Étienne Jouy, is said to have been rejected by Cherubini. Its rehearsals created so much opposition among the artists that the composer continued to revise the opera, finally arriving at an immense success. Another Spontini opera, *Cortez*, won the approval of Napoleon, because he hoped it would create public opinion against the Spaniards, whom he was then trying to annihilate. But Spontini portrayed them so sympathetically that the effect was exactly the opposite. Eventually called to Berlin, this Italian made the mistake of producing Weber's *Freischütz*, which put him completely in the shade as a composer, and his consistent hostility to German opera from then on (including even the bullying of young Mendelssohn) made him permanently unpopular with Teutonic audiences.

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Far more versatile and adaptable was Maria Luigi Carlo Zenobi Salvatore Cherubini. (These Italians ran to long names.) Beethoven admired his vocal writing extravagantly, but it appears that he did not return the compliment. His best known operas are *Lodoiska*, *Medea*, *Faniska*, and *Les Deux Journées*, known in Germany as *Der Wasserträger* (*The Watercarrier*). Toscanini recently revived a symphony by Cherubini, which made a good impression, and his church music is still important. He wrote two cantatas for Marie Antoinette.

### **ROSSINI AND OTHERS**

The man who really created the vogue of Italian opera was Gioacchino Antonio Rossini. There are countless stories about his biting sarcasm, his social graces and intrigues, and his ruthless domination of the musical scene, particularly in Paris, the center of operatic activity in those days. In an early opera, *I due Bruschini*, he had the second violins tap the lamp-shades with their bows in every bar of the Overture, made the bass sing high and the soprano low, inserted a funeral march into the most comical scene, and arranged the words "son pettito" in the Finale so that nothing was heard but "tito, tito, tito." His *Barber of Seville*, first produced in Rome under the title of *Almaviva*, was hissed on the opening night, chiefly because the local favorite, Paisiello, had already written an opera on the same subject. The original Overture was lost, and the composer

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substituted one that he had written for *Elisabetta*. Rossini borrowed one air from his own *Aureliano*, another from a Russian tune, and took the trio, *Zitt, zitti, note for note* from Haydn's *Seasons*. In *William Tell* he gave up most of the artificialities of his earlier style and became a serious musician, with inevitable antagonisms resulting. His popular *Stabat Mater* was sold three times, making money for all concerned. Rossini is credited with the statement that an opera singer needs three things, "Voice, voice, and voice."

Gaetano Donizetti had difficulty making any impression as a composer while Rossini was still active, but eventually became very popular on the operatic stage. *L'Elisir d'Amore* (*The Elixir of Love*) was written for Milan, and *Lucia di Lammermoor* (based on Scott's novel, *The Bride of Lammermoor*) for Naples. His lively operetta, *Il Campanello di Notte* (*The Night Bell*) had its origin in the financial straits of a Neapolitan company, which needed a novelty to attract attention. Donizetti remembered a Parisian vaudeville act, wrote both words and music, and had it produced within nine days. *La Favorita* was one of the works that Wagner had to arrange for cornet in his Paris days as a hack-writer. Jenny Lind, Sontag, and Patti all appeared with great success in Donizetti's popular *Daughter of the Regiment*.

Vincenzo Bellini, like Donizetti, was fortunate in his singers. His version of *Romeo and Juliet* (under the title of *I Capuletti ed i Montecchi*) succeeded largely through Mme. Pasta's impersonation of Romeo (with obvious

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advantages of costume). Maria Malibran, and later Patti and Albani, made a success of his *Sonnambula* (*The Sleepwalker*), while Pasta, Grisi, and eventually Lilli Lehmann, did full justice to *Norma*. This greatest of Bellini's operas was based on a tragedy by Soumet, which appeared at the Théâtre Français only a year earlier and was completely killed by its musical rival. Bellini's *I Puritani* had its tenor part written for Rubini, with so high a range that few other singers have been able to do it in the original key.

Amilcare Ponchielli is a "one-opera composer" in the sense that only his *La Gioconda* has survived. It was based upon Victor Hugo's *Angelo*, but no one has ever quite understood the plot, and its popularity is largely due to the famous *Dance of the Hours*, which has graced both the Metropolitan Opera House and the Radio City Music Hall.

Of modern Italian composers, Giacomo Puccini was Ponchielli's best pupil and selected by Verdi as his successor. *La Bohème* (taken from Henri Murger's novel) made his reputation, but neither *La Tosca* (from the Sardou drama) nor *Madame Butterfly* had an immediate success. The Japanese opera, at its première in Milan, was hooted and hissed off the stage, possibly because of the costuming. *Butterfly* started as a story by John Luther Long, was turned into a play by David Belasco, and finally into a libretto by Illica and Giacosa, who supplied most of Puccini's texts. The composer brought suit against the popular tune, *Avalon*, and collected \$25,000

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by proving that it was taken from the aria, *E lucevan le Stelle*, in *La Tosca*.

The names of Pietro Mascagni and Ruggiero Leoncavallo are generally associated because of the frequent pairing of their short operas, *Cavalleria Rusticana* and *Pagliacci*, sometimes called "the Heavenly Twins." Mascagni's opera won the prize offered by the publisher Sonzogno, and started a type of bloodthirsty realism in tabloid musical form. It is not generally remembered that he wrote the incidental music to Hall Caine's *Eternal City*. Sonzogno was also the publisher of *Pagliacci*, but only after Ricordi had kept Leoncavallo waiting three years for a production of his *Medici*.

### MAKERS OF FRENCH OPERA

The early Italian composers of opera mostly developed in French surroundings, with Paris for their headquarters. But there were also typical French composers, who worked out their own style individually. The Couperin family had almost as many musicians as the Bachs of Germany, with a climax in François Couperin, known as "Le Grand." He was not an operatic composer, but wrote charmingly for the harpsichord and other instruments, with a tendency to give his pieces programmatic titles.

Jean Philippe Rameau was the logical successor to Lully in France, but his operas did not gain recognition until he was past fifty years of age. In his early forties he wrote to the blind poet, Houdar de Lamotte, asking for a

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libretto, and assuring him that he had mastered "the art of concealing art," but his request was refused. Voltaire, however, let him set his lyric tragedy *Samson* to music, only to have its performance prohibited on the eve of its première. In his later years he said, "If I were twenty years younger, I would go to Italy, and take Pergolesi for my model, abandon something of my harmony, and devote myself to attaining truth of declamation, which should be the sole guide of musicians. But after sixty one cannot change; experience points plainly enough the best course, but the mind refuses to obey." This is an indication that Rameau might have accomplished the operatic revolution which Gluck later carried out.

The musical significance of the French philosopher, Jean Jacques Rousseau, has been both exaggerated and unduly minimized. He was not a trained composer, but succeeded in producing a very popular opera, *Le Devin du Village* (*The Village Sorcerer*), for which he wrote both words and music. Rousseau was accused of stealing this work from a Lyons musician named Granet. (His *Pygmalion* was traced to another Lyonnais, Coigniet.) The popular melody known as *Rousseau's Lullaby*, and also *Rousseau's Dream*, appears in *Le Devin du Village*. It is a simple scale tune, largely on three notes, and has been used as a hymn as well as a lullaby ("Bye O Baby," etc.) Rousseau tried to introduce a new system of notation (using numbers for the tones of the scale) and wrote scholarly articles for the French *Encyclopédie*, which were

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severely criticized by Rameau, who also claimed that his compositions showed "the ignorance of a schoolboy."

André Ernest Modeste Grétry also lacked a thorough knowledge of music, although his operas, particularly in the comic style, became very popular. There is a story that at the age of eighteen he walked all the way from his home town of Liège to Rome, in order to study there. He was accompanied by a smuggler and carried a pair of pistols for his own protection. Grétry seems never to have learned much about harmony, but had a real melodic gift. It was said of him that "you might drive a coach and four between his bass and first fiddle." Gluck's comment was, "You received from Nature the gift of appropriate melody, but in giving you this talent, she withheld that of strict and complicated harmony." "What he wrote was very clever, but it was not music," said Étienne Henri Méhul later.

This Méhul is likewise almost forgotten today, although he was at one time considered "the Mozart of France." He carried on the revolutionary ideas of Gluck, and was responsible for many novel innovations. In his opera, *Uthal*, he substituted violas for violins, which made Grétry cry out in agony, "Six francs for an E string!"

A typical Parisian was Daniel-François-Esprit Auber, remembered today by two operas, *Massaniello* (or *The Dumb Girl of Portici*) and *Fra Diavolo*. It is said that he got his first opportunity, when desperately poor, through the wife of the fashionable librettist, Planard, who said

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to her husband, "Can you not entrust one of your poems to poor Auber, who is so witty and such a good accompanist?" The woman's reasoning proved correct, for *La Bergère Châtelaine* was a success. Auber is credited with having composed a march while shaving. He wrote some cello concertos for his friend Lamare, who said, "Any-one might think I was the composer of these concertos, so strongly are they impressed with my personality." "Since that is so, my dear Lamare," answered Auber, "the concertos shall be published in your name," and they were.

Jacques François Fromental Elias Halévy was a Jewish composer whose last name was really Levi. He lives today entirely in his opera *La Juive*, which gave Caruso one of his famous roles. He was overshadowed by Giacomo Meyerbeer, also Jewish, whose real name was Jakob Liebmann Beer, to which the Meyer was added as the result of a bequest by a rich relative. Although born in Berlin, he spent much of his life in Paris, and was definitely French in his style.

Meyerbeer was first the pupil and then the close friend of Weber, who sent one of his early fugues to his own master, the Abbé Vogler. It came back months later with an exhaustive treatise on the fugue in general, a scathing criticism of Meyerbeer's fugue in particular, and an example by Vogler himself of a *Master's Fugue*, showing how it should be done. Unfortunately the Abbé's fugue was not very good either. But Meyerbeer persisted and sent Vogler another fugue, to which he received the

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reply: "Young man, Art opens to you a glorious future! Come to me at Darmstadt. You shall be to me as a son, and you shall slake your thirst at the spring of musical knowledge!"<sup>1</sup> Meyerbeer turned grand opera into the pretentious pageantry that some composers still consider ideal, and his *Robert le Diable*, *Les Huguenots*, *L'Africaine*, and *Le Prophète* have kept their place in the repertoire. Wagner unquestionably owed much to Meyerbeer's influence, first imitating him in *Rienzi* and then getting his help for its production and that of the *Flying Dutchman*. He showed his gratitude later by calling Meyerbeer "a miserable music-maker" and "a Jew banker to whom it occurred to compose operas."

### THE UNFORTUNATE BERLIOZ

Wagner was more friendly toward Hector Berlioz, but eventually turned against him also. Yet Berlioz had a great influence on modern orchestration, including Wagner's own. Unfortunately his ideas often ran ahead of his ability to carry them out. He was a person of exaggerated sentimentality, as indicated by his love for the Irish actress, Henrietta Smithson, whom he eventually married, to live unhappily until their separation. His second wife was Mlle. Recio, a singer of limited ability, who insisted on taking the leading parts in his works. Berlioz has no significance today as an operatic composer, but his "program symphonies," *Harold in Italy*, *Romeo and Juliet*, and the *Episode in the Life of an Artist*

<sup>1</sup> Mozart considered Abt Vogler an absolute charlatan.

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(*Symphonie Fantastique*) are still played. His popular *Roman Carnival* Overture was originally part of his opera, *Benvenuto Cellini*. The last scene of *Les Troyens* has been credited with influencing the close of *Götterdämmerung*. Berlioz's cantata, *The Damnation of Faust*, is famous for its introduction of the Hungarian *Rakoczy March*, which created a frenzy of patriotism among its listeners.<sup>1</sup> There is a story that the King of Prussia greeted Berlioz with, "I understand that you are the composer who writes for five hundred musicians." "Your Majesty has been misinformed," answered Berlioz, "I sometimes write for four hundred and fifty."

By comparison with Berlioz, Charles François Gounod was the conventional, mid-Victorian composer of France. His *Faust* has become one of the most popular operas, chiefly because of its good tunes. (The *Soldiers' Chorus* has been turned into a ribald drinking song and is also echoed in Ethelbert Nevin's *Narcissus*. Siebel's song reappears in the *Hiawatha* of a past generation, and the ballet music has been much imitated.) *Romeo and Juliet* is remembered chiefly for the coloratura waltz song. The much played *Ave Maria* was written over the C-major *Prelude* of Bach, which is a good piece on its own account.

Jacques Offenbach is another Jewish composer, originally named Levy, whose memory rests unfortunately upon the saccharine strains of the *Barcarolle* from *Tales of*

<sup>1</sup> This march was originally composed by a gypsy violinist, Michael Barna, court musician to Prince Franz Rakoczy, and later revised by another gypsy violinist, Ruzsitka.

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Hoffmann. He died the year before the production of this curious opera in Paris, and is reported to have foreseen his end, telling the impresario Carvalho, "Make haste, make haste to mount my piece; I am in a hurry, and have only one wish in this world—that of witnessing the première of this work."

Georges Bizet also died before he could be aware of the success of his masterpiece, the ever popular *Carmen*. Produced three months before his death, its temporary failure probably hastened the tragedy. It has been argued that the interpretation of the title role by Mme. Galli-Marié was too brutally realistic to please Parisian listeners. It was greatly toned down later by Minnie Hauck, Patti, and others, but came back to its primitive realism in the hands of Calvé. The libretto was by Meilhac and Halévy, founded on the story by Prosper Mérimée. It is generally admitted that the famous *Habanera* is an actual Spanish tune.<sup>1</sup>

The Belgian César Franck, who lived most of his life in Paris, occupies an almost unique position among musicians in the quiet routine of his career. He was organist at Ste. Clothilde for thirty-two years, often taught ten hours a day, and still managed to compose immortal music. When an idea occurred to him, he would

<sup>1</sup> The name, *Habanera*, comes from the city of Havana, where this form of dance was introduced by negro slaves. It is fundamentally the same as the tango, which was originally an African jungle dance (*tangana*), brought into Spain by the Moors, and eventually refined in the Argentine. It is perhaps significant that the tango rhythm appears in the *St. Louis Blues*, the work of a negro composer, W. C. Handy.

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stop his teaching and write it down. He was long handicapped by the reputation of a mystic aloofness from earthly strife and passion, and a supposed communion with the celestial choirs, possibly even the music of the spheres. Bostonians called his now popular *Symphony in D minor* "immoral" when they first heard it. The composer's own delighted comment, after the first performance in Paris, was, "It sounded just the way I thought it would."

Two more French musicians demand mention, Claude Achille Debussy, the radical, and Camille Saint-Saëns, the conservative. Debussy is credited with the creation of modern harmony, although his "whole-tone scale" had been used by the Russian Moussorgsky and others. His *Pelleas and Melisande* is absolutely unique in operatic literature through its absence of sustained melody or definite accompaniment. A similar technique of shadowy tone color is found in his songs, which are utterly unlike the *Lieder* of tradition. Debussy has been revealed recently as a far more human person than many had suspected. His wit was notorious. In view of his great composition, *La Mer*, his comments on the sea are of interest. From the English bathing-resort, Eastbourne, he wrote: "The sea rolls with a wholly British correctness. One does not sufficiently respect the sea. To put in it bodies deformed by daily life should not be allowed . . . these arms and legs which move in ridiculous rhythms. . . . it is enough to make the fish weep. There should be only sirens in the sea." (He should have

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visited some of our modern beaches!) Debussy's *Prelude to the Afternoon of a Faun* was inspired by a poem of Mallarmé, which has been frequently quoted in concert programs, as interpreted by Edmund Gosse.

Saint-Saëns, on the other hand, is an eminently correct but not particularly exciting composer of music in many forms. His *Samson and Delilah* has been produced both as opera and as oratorio. He shows a sense of humor in his *Carnival of the Animals*, which contains the famous cello melody known as *The Swan*, and also reserves one section for music critics.

The Norwegian Edvard Grieg was hailed by Bülow as "the Chopin of the North." His music for *Peer Gynt* became far more popular than Ibsen's drama. He found his materials in the folk-lore and peasantry of his native land, and his music is as strongly nationalistic as any ever written. His melodies often sound as though they were actual folk-music.

### ENGLAND AND RUSSIA

The three most important composers of England were Henry Purcell, Arthur Sullivan, and Edward Elgar. Purcell belongs to the tragic company of those composers who died young, his age being estimated at perhaps no more than thirty-six. He came of a musical family, and his father was almost equally noted as a composer. Of interest to modern coronation lovers is the story that, when William and Mary were crowned, Purcell sold seats in the organ loft of Westminster Abbey, and was

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threatened with dismissal unless he refunded the money. He must have given in, for he kept his job.

Sullivan, who was knighted by Queen Victoria, owes most of his reputation to the light operas that he wrote with Gilbert, but was individually responsible for a great variety of music. He wrote the hymn-tunes, *Onward Christian Soldiers* and *Brightly Gleams Our Banner*. Gilbert and Sullivan came to New York to write *The Pirates of Penzance* in order to protect their copyright against the pirates of the musical and theatrical business.<sup>1</sup> Sullivan himself was often accused of borrowing his tunes, for he was a clever imitator of any style, particularly the old English and the Italian. When someone pointed out that *When a Merry Maiden Marries*, in *The Gondoliers*, definitely echoed *Love's Old Sweet Song*, he answered, "We had only twelve tones between us."

Elgar's best known piece, the march *Pomp and Circumstance*, was written for the coronation of Edward VII, and its main melody is frequently sung to the words *Land of Hope and Glory*. His most interesting work, however, is the set of *Enigma Variations*, in which, as he says, he has "sketched, for their amusement and mine, the idiosyncrasies of fourteen friends, not necessarily musicians." He does not explain the "enigma," beyond saying that the connection between the theme and the variations is often "of the slightest texture" and that "through and over the whole set another and larger

<sup>1</sup> This opera contains the tune now best known as *Hail, Hail, the Gang's All Here* as a Pirates' Chorus.

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theme 'goes' but is not played." He compares the whole piece with a drama in which the chief character is never on the stage. The first variation is initialed "C.A.E.," representing Lady Elgar. The ninth, called *Nimrod*, refers to his friend A. J. Jaeger (literally translating his name, which is German for "hunter"). The initials G.R.S. on the eleventh variation doubtless stand for George Robertson Sinclair, an organist, as indicated by the "furious pedaling in the basses."

Russian art-music really began with Michael Ivanovich Glinka, called by Liszt "the Prophet-Patriarch." He first emphasized the importance of nationalism and was the patron saint of the "five" who later revived Russia's folk-music. Glinka's opera, *A Life for the Czar*, filled him with such enthusiasm that he was frequently far ahead of his librettist, Baron Rozen, who had to fit his words to the music, instead of vice versa. *Russlan and Ludmilla* was musically superior but less successful. It borrows a Persian melody, a ballet movement on a Turkish theme, and several genuine Tartar airs.

The "five" so often mentioned in Russia's musical history were Balakirew, Borodin, César Cui, Moussorgsky, and Rimsky-Korsakoff. It may be worth noting that Balakirew's *Overture on Russian Themes* contains the *Birch Tree* song, later used by Tschaikowsky in his *Fourth Symphony* (see pages 230-237). There is also in it a Spanish March given to the composer by Glinka, who recognized him as his successor, and founder of the new school of Russian music. In his Fantasia, *Islamey*, which has been

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called "the most difficult piece ever written for the piano," Balakirew showed his command of Oriental tone color, as also in the symphonic poem, *Tamara*.

Alexander Borodin was a doctor by profession, but turned to music under the influence of Balakirew. He is best remembered by his opera, *Prince Igor*, which was completed by Rimsky-Korsakoff and Glazounoff. The barbaric dances are particularly popular. Borodin also wrote two excellent symphonies.

César Cui was a military engineer, but quickly followed Balakirew's lead in music. His first composition was a *Scherzo* for piano, four-handed, built on the letters C.C. and B.A.B.E.G., representing himself and a lady named Bamberg, whom he married. His most popular piece is the *Orientale*, which uses the same folk-song melody heard in Tschaikowsky's *Marche Slav* (see page 244).

Modeste Moussorgsky was musically by far the most important of the entire group. He foretold modern harmony and wrote in a more honest, uncompromising style than any other composer of his time. His opera, *Boris Godounoff* (based upon Pushkin), remains the classic example of folk-materials adapted to the stage. Moussorgsky was a government clerk and considered himself musically an amateur. He fought poverty all his life and died miserably at forty-two.

Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakoff was a naval officer, who acquired his first interest in music as a child by hearing a combination of two violins, cymbals, and tambourine.

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He completed his first symphony during a cruise. He roomed with Moussorgsky for a time, and orchestrated *Boris Godounoff* and another Moussorgsky opera, *Khovantschina*. The popular *Song of India*, which has been turned even into a fox-trot, occurs as a tenor solo in Rimsky's opera, *Sadko*. Better known as a whole is the fascinating *Coq d' Or*, which Diaghileff arranged to be acted and danced in pantomime, with the singers in stalls at the sides of the stage. On the concert platform, *Scheherazade* holds its own against the symphonies of the world, with an amazing command of Oriental coloring.

Of modern Russian composers, Sergei Rachmaninoff is unfortunately best known by his youthful *Prelude in C-sharp minor*, concerning which many stories are told. The three notes which form its pattern have been interpreted variously as the bells of the Kremlin, as beggars pleading "Give us bread," and as a prayer, "Help us, Lord," of prisoners on their way to Siberia. With the bells as a basis, an elaborate program has been worked out, to include the burning of Moscow and the retreat of Napoleon's army. Rachmaninoff himself says, a bit wearily, that he was merely writing a study on three tones. Far more important is the fact that his second *Piano Concerto*, in C minor, won the Glinka prize of 500 rubles. Rachmaninoff's orchestral tone-poem, *The Island of the Dead*, was inspired by Böcklin's famous picture. In addition to his symphonies, concertos, and songs, he has made a choral setting of Poe's poem, *The Bells*.

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Anton Rubinstein was technically a Russian composer, but actually German in his style. Like many others, he lives through his least important works, the popular *Melody in F* and *Kamenoi-Ostrow*. The latter name comes from an island in the Neva River, below Leningrad, which is a favorite summer resort. Kamenoi means "small and rocky," and Ostrow is the word for "island." The piece is one of a set of twenty-four, written at Kamenoi-Ostrow, which was reached in winter by sleigh, over the ice of the river, and in summer by boat. This number (22 in the series) is reputedly a portrait of Mlle. Anna de Friedebourg, to whom it is dedicated. There is the sound of a bell, actually in the Greek chapel, and a fragment of ancient Hebrew music, now incorporated in the Greek Catholic service. The opening melody represents the personality of the lady who inspired it.

One final story about Rubinstein must be told, because it has had wide circulation as referring to the father of an infant prodigy. (It was a favorite of the late Montague Glass in this form.) The truth is that Rubinstein, rehearsing one of his operas, was so pleased with the work of the orchestra that he promised all the men a champagne supper if it was a success. In spite of their good playing, it failed, and the composer went home disgustedly to bed. He was awakened by a knock on the door. It was the double bass player, traditionally the Sam Goldwyn of all orchestras. "Go away!" shouted Rubinstein. "There is no party. The opera was a failure." The bass fiddler's historic answer was, "I liked it."

## XIX

### *Some World-famous Tunes*



HE rest of these stories must concern individual songs or pieces of instrumental music that have either become widely popular, or offer an interesting background, or both. Certain countries, like the British Isles, Germany, France, Italy, Russia, and the United States, present so much material that they demand separate treatment. But there are also plenty of melodies associated with no particular country, as well as those belonging to nations not listed above, and these may best be covered first.

If there is one song that can be said to belong to all the world, it is the familiar *Malbrough* or *Malbrouck*. English-speaking people know it as *He's a Jolly Good Fellow*, or *We Won't Go Home until Morning*, and staid businessmen at Rotary or Kiwanis luncheons have been known to sing it to a text that propounds the solemn thought, *The Bear Went over the Mountain*.

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The original French words are as follows:

Malbrough s'en va-t-en guerre, Mironton, mironton, mirontaine;  
Malbrough s'en va-t-en guerre, Ne sait quand reviendra.

They refer to the Duke of Marlborough, immortalized by the "famous victory" at Blenheim. But it is probable that this rather disrespectful ditty was improvised on the night after the battle of Malplaquet (September 11, 1709), perhaps by a hungry soldier, momentarily relieved of discipline.<sup>1</sup>

The melody may be much older than the words, and it has been argued that it was sung by the Crusaders.<sup>2</sup> Chateaubriand heard it sung by Arabs in Palestine, and decided that it had been brought there in the time of Godfrey of Bouillon or Louis IX and Joinville. This theory seems contradicted by the character of the tune, which is definitely of the period of Louis XIV.

The unknown soldier who made up the French words in the bivouac of Maréchal de Villars, at Quesnoy, must have been familiar with an older song about the Duke of Guise, published in 1566. The two are very similar in words and construction, although they cannot be sung to the same tune.

Mme. Poitrine used the song as a lullaby for the infant dauphin in 1781. This brought it to the attention of

<sup>1</sup> Soldier songs slandering their officers went all the way back to Julius Caesar, who was heartily disliked by some of his men. Cf. some of the verses of *Mlle. from Armentières*.

<sup>2</sup> The real *Crusaders' Hymn*, dating back to the twelfth century, is sung today as *Beautiful Saviour* or *Fairest Lord Jesus*.

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Marie Antoinette, who undoubtedly sang it at Versailles. Beaumarchais put it into his *Marriage of Figaro* in 1784, which made it the tune of the day for topical songs and parodies. Beethoven's use of it in his *Battle Symphony* has already been mentioned (see p. 80).

In 1867 *Malbrough* became the subject of an opéra bouffe in four acts, by Siraudin and Busnach, to which Bizet, Jonas, Legouix, and Delibes wrote the music. There is also an English song about the Siege of Gibraltar which uses this universally popular tune. It is found as an instrumental number in violin and flute collections of the eighteenth century, and also as a harpsichord lesson, with variations. Charles Dibdin, in his *Musical Tour*, 1788, writes about "young ladies hammering *Malbrouk* out of tune." About 1790 an English song, *The Maid of Primrose Hill*, was adapted to the tune, and from then on *Malbrough* had various texts, including the convivial ones best known today.

Second place among the songs of all the world might well go to *Gaudeamus Igitur*, which is regarded as the universal student song (see p. 220 for Brahms' use of it in his *Academic Overture*). It is hard to say just how old the tune is. The Latin words commonly sung to it are a mixture of sacred and secular texts, some of which ("*Ubi sunt qui ante nos*" and "*Vita nostra brevis est*") go back as far as the year 1267. The entire song may have been sung by the wandering scholars of the thirteenth century. An early version exists in manuscript before 1750, and the Latin words are completely assembled by

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Magister Kindeleben in his *Studentenlieder* of 1781 (Halle). There is a German translation by Johann Christian Günther dated 1717.

Older even than *Gaudeamus Igitur* is a drinking-song called *Mibi est propositum*, ascribed to a certain Walter de Mapes, a deacon at Oxford in the twelfth century. It has been argued that this may have had the tune later known as *Lauriger Horatius*, although it also fits the *Gaudeamus* melody. By 1824 the Germans knew *Lauriger Horatius* as the Christmas song, *Tannenbaum, O Tannenbaum*, and its most familiar American version is *Maryland, my Maryland*, with a variety of school and college adaptations more recently added. One of the finest of the actual *Odes* of Horace is preserved in another universal student song, *Integer Vitae*, whose tune was written by Friedrich Flemming, a Berlin physician. That classic of Christmas time, *Adeste Fideles*, is known as the *Portuguese Hymn*, and its tune has been attributed to John Reading, who died in 1692. It has been translated into German, English, and other languages.<sup>1</sup>

In the same class is the famous *Doxology*, also known as *Old Hundred*. (The English title is *Old Hundredth*, and the simplification seems to be a typical Americanism.) This tune takes us back to a certain Louis Bourgeois, who was chiefly responsible for the *Geneva Psalter*, in which it first appeared. It is more than probable that he composed

<sup>1</sup> Of other old Christmas songs, *The First Noël* has both French and English backgrounds. *The Holly and the Ivy* is old French, and *Deck the Hall (Nos Galan)* old Welsh.

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the fine melody himself. Bourgeois came to Geneva from Paris in 1541, and was given citizenship by the Council "in consideration of his being a respectable man and willing to teach children." He was shortly relieved of duties in the town guard and presented with a small china stove. When he asked for a raise in salary, he was presented with two measures of corn, "for that once, and in consideration of an unexpected addition to his family." Later he was imprisoned for changing some of the Psalm tunes "without leave," but his friend Calvin secured his release. The tune of the *Doxology* was first fitted to Psalm 134, and may have been adapted from a folk-song of the time, which was a general custom with practical church-musicians. There is a *Chanson* of the fifteenth century which is very similar. A version is found also in an Antwerp publication of 1540, *Pure Songs Made for the Honor of God*. It appears again in Utenhove's *Dutch Psalter* of 1561 and in Este's *Psalter* of 1592. The melody was first applied to the hundredth psalm, *All People That on Earth Do Dwell*, in Knox's *Anglo-Genevan Psalter* of 1561, and this was the foundation of the modern words. *Old Hundred* is sometimes given the name of *Savoy*, because it was sung by French congregations in the Savoy, London, during the reign of Charles II.

### **PARADE OF THE NATIONS**

Every nation, of course, has its own song or anthem, and most of these are musically significant, quite apart

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from their importance in current history. In most cases only the titles can be given here. Algeria has a hymn called *Ya men K'ta Djebal*, and the Arabian national air is *Kadjouja*. The Argentine Republic calls its national hymn *Oid, mortales, el grito sagrado*. Armenia and Syria share a common melody.

The Belgian *Brabançonne* is well known, dating from the revolution of 1830. The words were by a soldier named Jenneval, who was killed near Antwerp. The music was composed by François van Campenhout, a famous violinist and tenor of Brussels.

Canada uses *The Maple Leaf Forever*, and also the march, *Soldiers of the King*, which has been borrowed by Haverford College for its song, *Comrades*. Chile has a national song, *Dulce Patria*; with Costa Rica it is *De la Patria*, and with Cuba, *La Bayamesa*. Ecuador says *Salve, O Patria* and there is also *Guatemala, en tu limpia bandera*.

Hawaii's *Aloha Oe* was written long before Hawaii became an American territory. The words were by Queen Liliuokalani, and the music, probably arranged by her bandmaster, Professor Berger, borrowed an old hymn-tune for its verse, and built the chorus from George Root's *There's Music in the Air*. The native familiarity with both of these melodies may be credited to the American missionaries, who turned Hawaiian primitive rhythms and simple chants into a sentimental combination of melody and harmony. Hawaii also has a national hymn called *Hawaii pouoi*, and *Aloha Oe* has become largely a matter of tourist tradition.

## *Some World-famous Tunes*

Holland considers its national hymn *Mien Nierlandsch Bloed*, but also sings the patriotic air, *Willem van Nassauen*. One of the finest of Dutch melodies is the old *Prayer of Thanksgiving* ("Wilt beden nu treden"), which is particularly effective when sung by large groups of voices, like the Associated Glee Clubs, with whom it is a favorite.

Japan's *Kimygayo* was quoted by Puccini in his *Madame Butterfly*, with the melody slightly disguised. Mexico's *La Golandrina* (*The Swallow*), written by the Spanish composer, Narciso Seradell, has been called the equivalent of *Home, Sweet Home* to its people. Mexico is also very fond of the waltz, *Cielito lindo*, credited to a blind street singer, Fernandez, and first brought to the United States from Cuba. *La Cucaracha* (*The Cockroach*) refers to Carranza, to whom the term was applied by Villa. The tune may go back to the sixteenth century.

Persia has its *Salamatib Shah*, and Peru its *Somos libres*. In Roumania it is *Traesca Regele*, and in San Domingo, *Quis quo ya nos valientes*. Spain is rich in national music, with the *Himno de Riego* still considered official. But the best known Spanish song is unquestionably *La Paloma*, (*The Dove*), a tango written by Sebastian Yradier, another of the bird-songs so popular with the Latins.

The *Hamidji March* is not well known outside of its native Turkey, while Zanzibar has a *Sultan's Hymn* of similar obscurity to the rest of the world.

One of the finest Hungarian Songs, *The Heron*, appears in Liszt's *Hungarian Fantasy*. It is a simple scale tune,

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but gets its effects from the decidedly syncopated rhythm. The melody has been attributed to both Béni Egressy and Joseph Szerdahelyi. The background of the famous *Rakoczy March* has already been mentioned (see page 268).

Sweden has its *Vermeland* and *Spin, Spin*, while Horne-mann's *King of Kings* is considered the national air of Denmark, along with *King Christian*, whose words were translated by Longfellow. The Spanish-Creole *Ay, Ay, Ay*, composed by the Chilean Perez-Freire, has become very popular, as has *Estrellita*. The American *Juanita* is based on an actual Spanish tune, as is the German student song, *Grad aus dem Wirtshaus*.<sup>1</sup>

From Poland come various examples of the *Kujawiak*, the *Krakowiak*, the *Obertass*, and numerous *Mazurkas* and *Polonaises*. There is also the national hymn, *Poland is not Dead in Slavery*, written by the poet Wybitski during the revolution of 1830, with music by Michael Oginski, a nobleman, who popularized the Polish court dances. Typical Polish folk-songs are *Beyond the Ebro* and *Poor Mountaineer*.

Czechoslovakia still cherishes the *Battle Hymn of the Hussites*, and perhaps the most popular Bohemian national air is *Where is my Home?* by Franz Skroup, who wrote the first Czech opera, and was a Wagnerian enthusiast. Other famous Czechoslovakian melodies include *The Wedding*, *My Homeland*, *Good Night* (the traditional Bohemian lullaby), and *Over Tatra*, which

<sup>1</sup> *Juanita* also provides the *Alma Mater* of Colgate University.

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refers to the Tatra Mountains, of the Central Carpathian range, which are noted for their thunder-storms.

Bulgaria's *Pirotski March* has a national significance, shared by the *Stambouloff March*, with such patriotic songs as *Boteff's Prayer*, *Farewell to the People*, and *Be Proud, Balkan!* Croatia, which supplied Haydn with so many tunes, has a wealth of folk-songs, as well as instrumental music such as the *Tamburitzka Kolo*, which is used as a circle dance by both Croatian and Serbian peasants. (The tamburitzka is a five-stringed instrument much used for accompanying folk-music.)

The spirit of Finland has been well expressed by Sibelius in his popular tone-poem, *Finlandia*, but there are also interesting folk-songs to represent this highly individual country. *Summer Night*, *The Boy from Pori*, *The Sailor Boy Waltz*, and the mazurka known variously as *Finjorka* and *Vengerka* are particularly worthy of mention.

### **BACK TO ANTIQUITY**

The oldest piece of authentic Greek music is the *Hymn to Apollo*, probably composed nearly three hundred years before Christ. It was discovered at Delphi, inscribed on two tablets of marble (a third tablet seems to have been lost). The notes are the neumes of the third century B.C., and the hymn was evidently a prize-winning composition. The *Hymn of Freedom*, considered the national song of Greece, was written by Manzaros, who arranged an old Greek air to fit the words of the poet Salamos. Greece also has some significant church music, like the

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*Kinonikon* and *Kyrie Kekraxa*, mountain chants such as *Cleftopoula* and *Roumeliotica*, dances like the *Kalamatianos* and *Tsamikos*, and insurgent songs, of which the most famous is *O Javellas* (*Forty Heroes*), which describes the capture of the Turkish stronghold of Tripolitza.

The best known Hebrew song is unquestionably *Eili, Eili*, a traditional synagogal melody, originating in Russia or Poland and now familiar to all the world. It is sung today in the Yiddish dialect, and its words quote the twenty-second Psalm, *Eli, Eli, lama sabachtani*, reported by Matthew and Mark as the dying words of Christ on the cross ("My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken me?"). Shalitt's version of the music was arranged for modern use by the late Kurt Schindler and has maintained its authenticity, in spite of various claims of authorship. *Kol Nidre* is actually far more important Hebrew music. It is sung only on the eve of the Day of Atonement, when the Ark is opened and the Torah scrolls are taken out. Its words are the beginning of an Aramaic prayer of atonement. Sulzer recorded the melody, which has gone through many arrangements.

The folk-music of Iceland curiously shows the use of the ancient Greek modes or scales, chiefly the Lydian, Mixolydian, and Dorian. The national hymn is called simply *Island*, and there is also a patriotic song, *Midsummer*, naturally a popular subject in Iceland.

Norway has a national hymn, *Yes, We Love this Land!* written by Richard Nordraak and his poet cousin, Bjornson. Max Räbel's *Norway, My Norway* was dedi-

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cated to King Haakon VII and is also nationally popular. Grétry arranged a Norwegian toast, *To Norway, Mother of the Brave*, and there are many interesting folk-songs, like *Astri! Mi Astri!*, *Aa, Ola, Ola*, and *Han Mass Aan Lasse* (*Three Whole Days*), as well as the *Halling* (folk-dance) in various forms.

But the country that has unquestionably produced the greatest and most interesting mass of folk-music is Russia. The *Volga Boat Song* is perhaps the best known folk-song in the world today, and it is impossible to tell just how old it may be. It should be realized, however, that this song represents the boatmen as pulling their boats up the Volga River, not rowing or paddling. They turn themselves into canal-horses, as it were, and the words of the song refer to clumps of birch-trees in the distance, growing gradually nearer to prove that they are making progress. It is a fine example of the use of rhythm to lighten physical labor. *Dark Eyes* (*O Chichornia*) is a popular gypsy song of Russia, perhaps better known in America today than in its native country. *Two Guitars* is another familiar gypsy air. The *Kamarinskaia* is the national dance of Russia, and there are also the *Lesginka* and the *Hopak*, known in various musical settings. *Dubiniushka* is a famous Russian work-song. Stravinsky quotes the old Moscow street-song, *Down St. Peter's Road*, in his ballet *Petroushka*, and Tschaikowsky's use of the old *Birch Tree* song has already been discussed (see page 237). The old *Russian Anthem*, also quoted by Tschaikowsky, has now been

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superseded, but is still familiar to Americans as *Hail, Pennsylvania* and as a hymn-tune.

The folk-music of Russia is comparatively unknown to much of the outside world, because of the isolation of its country. On the other hand, songs of the British Isles, and of Germany, France, and Italy, have traveled to every other country and constitute a large and important part of the world's common musical property. Before going into their background, it should be remembered that there is always an individual composer involved in the creation of music, and that even pure folk-song can often be traced to some such individual. It is fair to use the term "folk-music" whenever a piece has become so widely popular that it overshadows the name of its composer, as well as when that composer's name is not actually known.

## XX

### *Songs of the British Isles*



All national anthems, the tune most widely known and used is the one called *God Save the King* throughout the British Empire, *Heil dir im Siegerkranz* in Germany, and *America* in the United States. It is not only England's national hymn (and runner-up to *The Star Spangled Banner* in America), but officially recognized also in Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Switzerland, the German states of Bavaria, Prussia, Saxony, and Würtemberg, and the cities of Hamburg, Mecklenburg, and Weimar. Finally it has been borrowed by innumerable schools and colleges, both in America and abroad. *God Save the King* can well be called the favorite patriotic melody of the whole world.

¶ Its origin is shrouded in doubt and has created endless discussion and occasionally bitter argument, no less than seven people having been mentioned as the probable authors. Even in England there is definite disagreement,

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with one faction standing up for the fittingly named John Bull as the original composer, and another heartily endorsing Henry Carey for the same honor.

Dr. Bull's claim to recognition is based on the fact that in 1616 he wrote an air with variations, entitled *God Save the King*, and, while this melody is totally different from what was later associated with these words, he nevertheless left another composition which is strikingly similar to the established tune, particularly in the second half ("Send him victorious," etc.). It has been proved that this music was performed by Dr. Bull for James I.

Henry Carey, who is generally, but perhaps carelessly, credited with the creation of *God Save the King*, has two authentic stories in his favor. First, John Christopher Smith, who was Handel's amanuensis, asserts that Carey brought him the manuscript to have the bass corrected. Second, a Mr. Townsend testifies that his father heard Carey sing *God Save Great George, Our King* in 1740, at a dinner party celebrating the capture of Portobello by Admiral Vernon. (This was the Vernon for whom Washington's Mt. Vernon was named.) After making a great impression with his performance, Henry Carey assured the company that the song was of his own composition.

It is perhaps fair to say that Carey first put *God Save the King* into the actual form in which it is known today, but he could easily have been influenced by the earlier melody of Dr. Bull, and possibly by other factors as well. Both Henry Purcell and his teacher, John Blow, have

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been mentioned as possible composers of the anthem. Geneva claims that it was originally a Swiss national hymn, written as far back as 1602, to celebrate the victory of the ancient republic over the troops of the Duke of Savoy. A German writer, E. Handtmann, argues that it was a song of the pilgrims in Silesia, taken by them from a still older liturgical chant.

A book of the Dutch Free Masons, *La Lire Maçonne*, published at the Hague in 1763, contains a song called *D'Ongeveinsdheid*, to be sung to the tune of "God Seav (*sic*) great George our King," which is practically the modern version. An arrangement for the lute has been found in the Germanic Museum of Nuremberg, possibly dating back to 1760. In 1790 Heinrich Harries published it in Denmark, in the *Flensburgsches Wochenblat*, as "A song to be sung by the Danish subjects at the Fête of their King [Christian VII, brother-in-law of King George] to the melody of the English Hymn."

The German *Heil dir im Siegerkranz* was written by Balthasar Gerhard Schumacher, and published in the Berlin *Spenersche Zeitung* December 17, 1793. This version was later adopted as an official anthem by Prussia, Saxony, and other German states. But Johann Nicolaus Forkel had already produced in 1791 a set of twenty-four variations on the tune, for clavichord or "forte-piano." Forkel was a pupil of the great Bach, and curiously marked the music *Tempo di Minuetto*.

Lully had evidently made an arrangement of the tune for Louis XIV, and it was at one time argued that he had composed the melody, largely because the nuns

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of St. Cyr insisted that it was sung there in the seventeenth century and was undoubtedly of French origin. Handel used it later for a song to the Elector of Hanover (King George I) and was at one time accused of having claimed it as his own.

Beethoven had a great respect for the melody, and wrote a series of seven variations on it in 1804. He also used it in his *Battle Symphony*, at the suggestion of Mälzel (see p. 80), and there is a sentence in his diary: "I must show the English a little what a blessing they have in their *God Save the King*." Weber also used the tune, introducing it in his cantata, *Kampf und Sieg*, and his *Jubel Overture*, and twice making vocal arrangements of it.

The music of *God Save the King* first appeared in America in 1761, and was published in a psalm-book called *Urania* under the title of *Whitefield's*, to the words of the hymn, *Come Thou Almighty King*. (They fit it excellently.) The "*Whitefield's*" is explained by the fact that this same combination appeared in G. Whitefield's collection of hymns, published in London in 1757.

The words of *America* were written in 1832 by the Reverend Samuel Francis Smith, of Harvard, Boston, Waterville, Maine, and Newton, Massachusetts. He found the tune in a collection of German songs (obviously with the words *Heil dir im Siegerkranz*) and, struck with its patriotic possibilities and unaware that it was already the British national anthem, immediately wrote

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his own words, *My Country, 'tis of Thee*. Lowell Mason gave it its first public performance at the Fourth of July celebration of 1832 in the Park Street Church, Boston. It was quickly taken up all over the country, and has been recognized as an American national anthem ever since.<sup>1</sup>

Of other British patriotic songs, *Rule, Britannia* was written by the famous Dr. Thomas Augustine Arne, who put it into the masque of *Alfred*, produced in 1740 at the home of the Prince of Wales, to celebrate the anniversary of the accession of the House of Hanover. The words were by James Thomson, author of *The Seasons*. Later Arne turned it into a complete opera.<sup>2</sup>

The origin of *The British Grenadiers* is unknown, but the regiment of that name was formed in 1678, which at least sets an early limit to the date of the song. There are two old tunes, *Nancie* and *The London Prentice*, which are quite similar. The melody was borrowed for an early American song by Joseph Warren, called *Free America*.

### OTHER BRITISH SONGS

Thomas Moore called the tune of *The Girl I Left Behind Me* Irish, but it seems established as the English melody known as *Brighton Camp*. The words probably date back to 1758, when there were large camps along the coast of England, and the tune was familiar by 1770.

<sup>1</sup> Charles Timothy Brooks wrote another American version, starting: "God bless our native land, firm may she ever stand."

<sup>2</sup> For a possible Handelian origin, see p. 41.

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It has served as a *chant du départ* for soldiers the world over, and is one of the best fife-tunes ever written.

Outside of *God Save the King*, the best known English song is surely *Drink to Me Only with Thine Eyes*. It is impossible to tell how old the melody may be. Some have ascribed it to Mozart, but this is unlikely. There is also a Colonel R. Mellish, who has been credited with the air. Ben Jonson certainly wrote the words, which appeared, with the title *To Celia*, in a group of his poems, *The Forest*, published in 1616. What is not generally realized is that "rare" old Ben took his idea and most of his actual phrases directly from the Greek philosopher, Philostratus, of the third century B.C. In the *Letters of Philostratus*, the following separate paragraphs may be found: "Drink to me only with thine eyes; or, if thou wilt, putting the cup to thy lips, fill it with kisses, and so bestow it upon me. . . . I, as soon as I behold thee, thirst, and taking hold of the cup, do not indeed apply that to my lips for drink, but thee. . . . I sent thee a rosy wreath, not so much honoring thee (though this is also in my thoughts) as bestowing favor upon the roses, that so they might not be withered. . . . If thou wouldest do a kindness to thy lover, send back the reliques of the roses I gave thee, no longer smelling of themselves only, but of thee."

In Shakespeare's time the most popular tune in England was *Green Sleeves*. He mentions it twice in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. It was included in the *Dancing Master* of 1686, but is mentioned as early as 1580 in the *Sta-*

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tioners' Register. The *Beggar's Opera* made use of it, and the same tune has the titles *Which Nobody Can Deny* and *Christmas Comes but Once a Year*. Thomas Moore wrote the best known words to this lively air.

Shakespeare's songs must originally have been sung to traditional melodies, but they were all set to music later, the most famous versions being those of Thomas Arne (*Under the Greenwood Tree* and *Blow, Blow, Thou Winter Wind*, from *As You Like It*; *Where the Bee Sucks*, from *The Tempest*; and *When Daisies Pied*, from *Love's Labor's Lost*). But *The Lass with a Delicate Air* was written by Arne's foolish son Michael, who ruined himself in a search for the philosopher's stone.

Christopher Marlowe's *Come Live with Me and Be My Love* (*The Passionate Shepherd to His Love*), perhaps written as early as 1591, appears in *Corkine's Ayres*, Book II, in 1612, but with no credit for the tune. Isaak Walton later referred to it as "that smooth song which was made by Kit Marlowe." Another fine old English song is *Passing By*, with words by Robert Herrick and a melody by Thomas Ford, appearing in *Ford's Music of Sundry Kinds*, in 1607. Of the same type is *My Lovely Celia*, originally *My Goddess Celia*, by George Munro, organist of St. Peter's, Cornhill.

Among the oldest of English songs is the ballad *Chevy Chase*, written down by Richard Sheale, minstrel to the Earl of Derby, about 1548. The tune was also known as *Flying Fame*. Another old-timer is *The Three Ravens*, which appears in the collection called *Melismata*

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in 1611. The soldiers of William the Conqueror are said to have sung a *War Song of the Normans* at the battle of Hastings.

The name of Henry Carey, already attached to *God Save the King*, is remembered also through the popular *Sally in Our Alley*, whose last line is customarily added to modern toasts and vocal convivialities of the *Sweet Adeline* type. The familiar melody, however, is not Carey's at all, but a traditional tune known as *The Country Lass*. (His best song is probably *A Pastoral*.)

Charles Dibdin was a logical successor to Carey and Arne, and enjoyed the title of "Tyrtaeus of the British Navy." He is credited with having composed over thirteen hundred songs. Among the most famous is *Tom Bowling*, written on the death of Dibdin's favorite brother, a captain in the navy. *The Lass that Loves a Sailor* appeared in a comic opera called *The Round Robin*.

Richard Leveridge, who contributed *The Roast Beef of Old England* to a great song-literature, was a popular bass-singer, as well as a composer, in the closing years of the seventeenth century and the first of the eighteenth. His *Black-eyed Susan* once saved the life of the ballad singer Incledon, who was challenged by an insulted army captain, and "gave satisfaction" by singing the song so beautifully that the insult was forgotten.

Most famous of English humorous songs is *The Vicar of Bray*, whose hero was Simon Alleyn, Canon of Windsor and Vicar of Bray, in Berkshire. He was a Papist under Henry VIII, Protestant under Edward VI, Papist again

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under Mary, and finally Protestant under Elizabeth. When ridiculed for this chameleon style of religion, he answered that it was his principle "to live and die the Vicar of Bray." The song was written by a soldier in Colonel Fuller's troop, and its tune was *The Country Garden*, basis of the familiar Morris Dance, which Percy Grainger has popularized as *Country Gardens*.

*The Mermaid* is a very old sea chantey, whose origin is unknown. The hunting-song, *John Peel*, also has music which cannot be traced, but its words are by John Woodcock Graves. A lovely *May Day Carol* has become familiar in the effective arrangement of Deems Taylor. *Love Me Little, Love Me Long*, still a popular song, appears in the *Dancing Master* of 1686 as the tune, *Mad Robin*. The words were written much later by William Chappell.

*Oh, No, John* has a tune originally called *Billy Taylor*, possibly of French origin. The song is a variant of the old English *Keys to Heaven*, and is used in Somerset for children's games called *Lady on the Mountain* and *Lady on Yonder Hill*. There is an American version called *No, Sir*, and the Salvation Army turned it into *Yes, Lord!*

Most of the southern mountain music of America, as well as a number of cowboy songs, can be traced directly to old English ballads, among which the most prominent, perhaps, are *Lord Randal* and *Barbara Allen*. The combination of two children's songs, *A Frog He Would A-wooing Go* and *Frog and Mouse* reappears in the Kentucky mountains as *Frog Went a-Courtin'*. The English

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*Raggle Taggle Gypsies* has wandered all over the world, like its protagonists.

A comic singer named G. W. Ross turned the old Somerset song of *Jack Hall* into *Samuel Hall*, introducing the rougher elements and often bringing a "gallows and halter" upon the stage to make sure of his laughs. The original Jack Hall was a chimney-sweep and had nothing of the desperate character of his Hydelike successor, Sam.

### IRELAND AND SCOTLAND

Some of the songs of Scotland and Ireland may have had an English origin, musically. *Jock o' Hazeldean* is claimed by both England and Scotland, and *My Lodging is on the Cold Ground*, while used by Tom Moore for his famous words, *Believe Me if All those Endearing Young Charms*, seems definitely English rather than Irish and has been attributed to Matthew Lock. It is perhaps best known today as *Fair Harvard*. Cornell's familiar *Alma Mater* song (*Far above Cayuga's Waters*), also known as *Amici*, gets its tune from the Irish *Annie Lisle*. It has been used by many other colleges and schools all over America.

One of Ireland's finest melodies is the so-called *Londonderry Air*, or *Irish Tune from County Derry*. It has been fitted with the words *Would God I were the Tender Apple Blossom*, by Katharine Tyan Hinkson, and also *Danny Boy*, by Fred E. Weatherly. Percy Grainger made

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a choral arrangement of it, substituting vocal syllables for words, and Fritz Kreisler's violin transcription is well known. (He uses the title *Farewell to Cucullain*, which may have been applied to an early version of the same tune.)

Thomas Moore is often credited with composing the tunes to his Irish songs, but probably did no more than edit traditional melodies to fit his words. Charles Villiers Stanford, in his Preface to Moore's *Irish Melodies*, says: "There is scarcely a melody which Moore has left unaltered, and, as a consequence, unspoilt." Yet Moore's versions have become the popular ones, and it is through him that Irish music is best known.

Moore's words, *The Harp that Once thro' Tara's Halls*, are set to an old tune called *Gramachree*. (Tara Castle was the traditional place of the Irish harpers' contests, which originally inspired the Minnesingers of the Wartburg.) *Has Sorrow thy Young Days Shaded?* goes back to a tune called *Sly Patrick*. *The Last Rose of Summer*, immortalized in Flotow's *Martha*, is a combination of Moore's words and an old melody called *The Groves of Blarney*. The music of *The Minstrel Boy*, one of Moore's finest songs, is originally *The Moreen*, whose title is the diminutive of Mor or Moira, a girl's name.

Samuel Lover, who wrote *The Low-backed Car*, *Barney O'Hea*, and other popular Irish songs, and who was a composer as well as a poet, will be remembered also as the grandfather of that genial Irish-American musi-

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cian, Victor Herbert. *The Little Red Lark*, with words revised by Alfred Perceval Graves, was originally *The Little Red Lark of the Mountain*. *The Little Stalk of Barley* supplied Francis A. Fahy with the tune for *Little Mary Cassidy*. Edward de Vere wrote the words of *The Snowy-breasted Pearl*, using the idea and melody of an old song, *Pearl of the White Breast*.

The rousing tune of *St. Patrick's Day* has long been considered unofficially as Ireland's national air, and goes back to the first decade of the eighteenth century. It was played by the Irish war-pipers at the Battle of Fontenoy, in 1745, and was first printed in Rutherford's *Country Dances* in 1749. Isaac Bickerstaffe, in 1762, set one of his songs in *Love in a Village* to this tune, and Tom Moore, in 1810, turned it into *Tho' Dark are Our Sorrows*. Its rhythmic pattern is similar to that of the familiar *Irish Washerwoman*. Beethoven arranged many of the Irish tunes, including the historic *Garry Owen*, to which he gave three different arrangements, but his materials were not all authentic.<sup>1</sup>

*The Wearing of the Green*, which has caused its full share of political and private brawls, was an Irish street-ballad of 1798. It was altered by Dion Boucicault, who added a third stanza, referring to America as a haven for those who suffered from tyranny. The name of Bonaparte was often substituted for that of Napper Tandy in the song. *Killarney* was written by Michael

<sup>1</sup> It has been suggested that Beethoven's *Seventh Symphony* was strongly influenced by Irish music, with its Finale theme an actual folk-tune.

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William Balfe, who wrote the popular opera, *The Bohemian Girl*.

One more Irish song deserves mention here because of its wide use as a basis for parodies and topical verses, for which purpose it has a tune that is just about ideal. This song is *The Son of a Gambolier*. It was best known at one time through a set of verses in German dialect called *Dunderbeck*. American colleges know it as *A Rambling Wreck from Georgia Tech*. Not so long ago it was fitted with words explaining the fundamentals of bridge (*Sing a Song of Contract*). Where and how it originated no one seems to know. But it has certainly been sung for a long, long time, and with countless different sentiments. It is the father of all the tunes in 6-8 time, like *Solomon Levi*, which provide that simplest of rhythmic patterns and lead to equally simple rhyme schemes, tempting the amateur poets of all the world to write their own words and hear them sung with hearty enthusiasm.

The two best known Scotch songs are probably *Auld Lang Syne* and *Annie Laurie*. The latter has had some fanciful stories woven around it, including a movie version which tells the pathetic tale of the girl who loved William Douglas, member of a rival clan. They met at the "wishing seat," where her father caught them. She saved her lover's life, but was imprisoned by her father until word came that Douglas was dead in battle. Meanwhile he had written *Annie Laurie*, to immortalize their love. The fact is that Lady John Scott wrote both the words and the tune, but based them both

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on traditional material. Her own account is that the first verse is old, the second was altered by her, and the third entirely her own. The song has been attributed to "a Mr. Douglas of Fingland," which may justify the film fantasy.<sup>1</sup>

The words "Auld Lang Syne" are a very old expression in Scotland, much older than the song of that name. The text as sung today is partly by Robert Burns and partly traditional. The tune is an ancient strathspey, *I Fee'd a Lad at Michaelmas*. It was also used for the old song, *The Miller's Wedding*.<sup>2</sup>

Burns himself is responsible for the story that *Scots wha hae wi' Wallace Bleed*, now considered the Scottish national anthem, was first sung by Robert Bruce's men at the battle of Bannockburn, in 1314. When he wrote his stirring ode, he called it "Robert Bruce's March to Bannockburn, to its own tune." At the end of the text, he wrote, "So may God ever defend the cause of Truth and Liberty as He did that day! Amen! R. B." The tune is generally known as *Hey, Tuttie Tattie* (or *Taitie*) supposedly imitating the martial notes of a trumpet. When used as a dirge, it is called *The Land o' the Leal*. Lady Nairne, responsible for the words of many fine Scottish songs, used the tune for *I'm Wearing awa', Jean*.

<sup>1</sup> This "Mr. Douglas" seems to have been William Douglas, who loved the daughter of Robert Laurie, Baronet of Maxurlton. But he did not "lay him down and die," but married Betty Clerk of Glenboig, who bore him six children.

<sup>2</sup> Vassar College uses it today as *The Rose and Silver Gray*.

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The words of the familiar *Loch Lomond* ("By yon bonnie banks") have been attributed to Lady Scott, but her own story is that she picked up both words and melody from a little boy in the streets of Edinburgh. It has been established that the source of the air is an old tune sometimes called *Kind Robin Loes Me* and sometimes *Robin Cushie*. It is built on the six-note scale, instead of the pentatonic, so common in Scotch music. The text indicates that the song is sung by a fugitive, who takes "the low road" to escape capture in returning to his native land.

### SCOTTISH LAKES AND RIVERS

*Afton Water* ("Flow gently, sweet Afton") shares the popularity of *Loch Lomond* (representing one of the most famous of Scottish lakes), with words written by Bobbie Burns in 1786. He gave the song to Mrs. Stewart, at Afton Lodge, as a return for her kindness, and indicated that the heroine was his own favorite "Highland Mary." The Afton is a small river in Ayrshire, running into the Nith.<sup>1</sup>

Burns also wrote the words to *Bonnie Doon* ("Ye banks and braes"), and its tune has an interesting history. It is known by the name of *The Caledonian Hunt's Delight*, and was composed by a certain James Miller, who was told by a musical friend to "keep to the black keys of the harpsichord and preserve some kind of rhythm" and

<sup>1</sup> The tune has been curiously fitted to the Christmas song, *Away in a Manger*, known as "Luther's Carol."

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he would "infallibly compose a Scots air." This theory worked out perfectly, and if the melody is played in G-flat, it will be found entirely on the black keys. (The pattern of the five black keys, so easily found on the piano, and a favorite with many amateurs, actually represents the pentatonic scale of folk-music.)

*Robin Adair* is an ancient Celtic air, whose original title could be translated "A hundred thousand welcomes, island of my love," and strictly belongs to Ireland as well as Scotland. The song is also known as *Eileen Aroon*, and has a rather complicated history. It is generally agreed that the original words ("Eihlin a ruin") were written by Carroll O'Daly about 1385. This gentleman was known as the "chief composer of Ireland, and musical doctor of the county of Corcomroe" (County Clare). The "Ducdame" of the melancholy Jacques in Shakespeare's *As You Like It* is a quotation from this song ("Ducca tu no'n vonatu"). In *Coriolanus* Shakespeare quotes the line, "a hundred thousand welcomes," now a common Irish salutation, "Cead mile failte." The tune was written down by Cornelius Lyons, harper to the Earl of Antrim, about 1702, and Denis Hampson brought it to Scotland in 1714. England heard it in 1729, as a part of Charles Coffey's *Beggar's Wedding*, a ballad-opera played that year at both Drury Lane and the Hay-market, as well as in rival booths at Bartholomew Fair. The Scotch words, *Robin Adair*, were written by Lady Caroline Keppel about 1753. Haydn arranged the Irish version in 1803, and Moore four years later gave it the

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words, *Erin, the Tear and the Smile*. Finally, the French composer, Boieldieu, used the tune in his opera, *La Dame Blanche*, founded on the Scott novels, *The Monastery* and *Guy Mannering*.

Lady Nairne is responsible for the words of *The Hundred Pipers* ("Wi' a hundred pipers an' a' an' a'"), and this stirring song also has an interesting historic background. It was inspired by the hundred pipers who preceded the entrance of Prince Charles Edward Stuart into Carlisle Castle. It is said that two thousand Highlanders crossed the Esk at Longtown, with only their heads showing above the water. When they arrived on the opposite shore, they danced reels to the pipers' music until their clothes were dry.

*Comin' thro' the Rye* is generally credited to Bobbie Burns, but rests on an older foundation. The first three verses and the tune are in Johnson's *Scots' Musical Museum*, and some singer evidently added the fourth stanza. The "Rye" is not a stream, as sometimes assumed, but refers to a damp field of grain. In the original version of the words, there is a line that "she draigl't a' her petticotie," which would be as likely in a wet field as in an actual stream. The tune has also had the title *The Miller's Wedding*.

*Bonnie Dundee* ("To the Lords o' Convention") has words by Sir Walter Scott, dated 1825. But the song appears in D'Urfey's *Pills to Purge Melancholy* in 1719, under the title *Jockey's Escape from Dundee*. The air is known as *Adew, Dundee*. The words of the chorus seem

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much older than the rest of the song, the original version reading:

Come fill up my Cup, come fill up my Can,  
Come saddle my Horse, and call up my Man.  
Come open the Gates, and let me go free,  
And shew me the way to Bonnie Dundee.

A later tune is credited to Charlotte Sainton-Dolby.

A popular Scottish song, still widely sung, is *Turn Ye to Me*, sometimes called *The Sea-mew*, and also known by its refrain, *Horo Mbairi Dhu*, which is the name of the original tune. The text is by Christopher North (John Wilson) and there is a story that the original words were composed by "a female maniac, who sung them . . . in so sweetly wild a manner as to thrill the listener with pleasing terror."

Lady Nairne's *The Laird of Cockpen* is to a very old tune, *When She Cam' Ben She Bobbit*. The Laird himself was a friend of Charles II, a musician and a famous wit. *John Anderson, my Jo* was given its words by Burns in 1789, but its tune goes back to 1615. The original John Anderson was the town piper of Kelso.

Burns wrote *A Man's a Man for a' That* to an old tune already called *For a' That an' a' That*, also known as *Lady MacIntosh's Reel* and *There's nae Luck about the House*. The date was January, 1795. He considered it something of a joke, and added the note, "the piece is not really poetry."

*Within a Mile o' Edinburgh Town* has words by Thomas D'Urfey and music by James Hook. *Caller Herrin'* is

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another Nairne text, with a melody by Nathaniel Gow, also known as *Will Ye no Come Back Again?* Sir Walter Scott wrote the words of *Jock o' Hazeldean*, and the air is known as *Willie and Annet*. *Leezie Lindsay* goes back to the fragment of an old ballad, *Donald of the Isles*. Its accepted words are by Robert Allen. *My Faithfu' Johnnie* is one of the Scotch songs arranged by Beethoven. *Bonnie Prince Charlie* owes its words to James Hogg and its music to Neil Gow, Jr.

One more song must be included, *The Blue Bells of Scotland*, not only because of its popularity, but because its writer once lived in the United States. A little Scotch girl named Annie McVicar came to America in 1758 to join her father, who was an officer in the British army stationed at Albany, N. Y. Back in Scotland a few years later, Annie married the chaplain of Fort Augustus, James Grant. She wrote *The Blue Bells of Scotland* in 1799, when the Marquis of Huntly departed for the Continent with his regiment of Highlanders. The tune is attributed to a Mrs. Jordan, who probably based it upon a traditional melody, "altered to suit the limited compass of her voice." Mrs. Grant's words have also been called *The New Highland Lad* and *Highland Laddie*.

Wales, the home of the bards and of the Druids celebrated in *Norma*, has a vast musical literature, of which only two songs are really well known today. They are of course the immortal *March of the Men of Harlech* and *All thro' the Night*. The latter is called *All the*

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*Livelong Night* in the words of J. M. E. Dovaston. The air is an old one, originally called *Ar Hyd y Nos*, or *Poor Mary Ann*. It is a perfect example of folk-song structure in the AABA form, the main theme being repeated literally, and again for a close, after the contrasting section.

Harlech is a small town on the Welsh coast, with an ancient castle. In 1468 it was forced to surrender to the Yorkist invaders, and the *March of the Men of Harlech* dates from that event. The Welsh name of the tune is *Rhyfelgyrch Gwyr Harlech*. There are words by John Oxenford and Thomas Oliphant.<sup>1</sup>

There is a Welsh serenade, *Mentra Gwen*, belonging to legendary folk-music. Its modern version is included in Blind Parry's collection of *Old Welsh Airs*, published in 1781. *Y Deryn Pur* (*The Dove*) is another of the frequently encountered "dove songs" of folk-music, with the bird always used as a lover's messenger (see p. 283).

The national anthem of Wales is *Land of my Fathers*, by James Evans. There is also a fine hymn, *The Golden Harp*. An old song, *The Land of White Gloves*, refers to the ancient Welsh custom of having the high sheriff present the judge with a pair of white gloves when he has no cases to hear at a court session, a common occurrence in the past.

There were many habits and traditions of the old days that modern civilization has completely forgotten.

<sup>1</sup> The tune has been used by Georgetown University as *Sons of Georgetown*.

## XXI

### *Songs of Germany, France, and Italy*



N spite of *Deutschland über Alles*, to Haydn's Croatian melody, and *Heil dir im Siegerkranz*, offspring of *God Save the King*, in spite even of the Nazi *Horst Wessel*, Germany's national anthem remains *Die Wacht am Rhein*. Its words were written in 1840 by a Swabian merchant named Max Schneckenburger, who is otherwise unknown to history. His inspiration came from the threat of a French invasion on the left bank of the Rhine. Three composers almost immediately tried their hand at setting the Schneckenburger text to music, F. Mendel, Leopold Schroeter, and F. W. Sering. But it had to wait for the music of Carl Wilhelm, fourteen years later, to be recognized as one of the greatest of all patriotic songs.

Wilhelm was a pupil of Spohr, and for twenty-five years conductor of the Liedertafel of Crefeld. He com-

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posed his music as a part-song for men's voices, March 14, 1854, and it was first sung in the following June. There is a story that it was given as a commencement piece to a certain school-teacher, who later sold it for his own considerable profit. In any case, the composer seems to have received no financial return until 1871, when he was granted an annual pension of \$750, in view of the enormous popularity achieved by *The Watch on the Rhine* during the Franco-Prussian War. He lived only two more years to enjoy this wealth, but would probably be glad to know that a monument was erected to his memory in his native town of Schmalkalden.

Thalheim, in Würtemberg, also has a monument to Schneckenburger, who died in 1849, without ever knowing how well his words would sound to Wilhelm's music, or how nationally effective they would become. The song was the inspiration of the National Denkmal near Bingen, by Johannes Schilling, unveiled by the Emperor in 1883, with its heroic figure of Germania and the symbolical statues of War and Peace.<sup>1</sup>

But the German song that people all over the world are most inclined to sing is unquestionably *Die Lorelei* ("Ich weiss nicht was soll es bedeuten"), which concerns itself with a legend of the Rhine, not with its significance as a boundary-line. The familiar *Lorelei* is often considered an actual folk-song, but that is a mistake. Its composer was Friedrich Silcher, also a Swabian by

<sup>1</sup> Americans also know the tune of *Die Wacht am Rhein* through Yale's anthem, *Bright College Years*.

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birth, and for over forty years *Kapellmeister* at the University of Tübingen.<sup>1</sup>

Silcher's popular setting of Heine's words was only one of many lovely melodies that he composed, all in the folk style, of which *Ännchen von Tharau* and *Nun leb' wohl, du kleine Gasse* (*Now Farewell, thou Little Street*) are perhaps the best known, and musically at least the equals of *Die Lorelei*. The legend of the siren of the Rhine, who lured mariners to their doom (still preserved in the famous Loreley Rock), was turned into various art-songs, by Liszt and other composers, but none more effective than Silcher's simple little strophic tune. Mendelssohn was engaged in making an opera out of the story at the time of his death, to a libretto by Geibel. He had completed a Finale in which the heroine, standing on the Loreley Rock, invoked the spirits of the Rhine; also an *Ave Maria* and a *Vintagers' Chorus*, all of which were subsequently performed and published. Max Bruch and Franz Lachner also made operas of the Loreley legend.

The Germans use the words *Schönster Herr Jesu* for the ancient *Crusaders' Hymn* and *Herbei, O ihr Gläubigen* for *Adeste Fideles* (see page 280). Another popular Christmas hymn is known as *O du fröhliche (Weinachtszeit)* and this is originally a folk-song, the *Sicilian Mariner's Hymn*,

<sup>1</sup> The author's father, the Rev. Adolph Spaeth, of Philadelphia, studied music and played the clarinet under Silcher at Tübingen, and received from him a practical knowledge of song-writing that showed itself clearly in his own fine hymn-tunes, which are still popular in the Lutheran Church.

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sung at one time to the Latin words, *O Sanctissima, O Purissima*. The best known of all Christmas songs, of course, is *Stille Nacht* (*Silent Night*), which is not at all a folk-song, as so often believed, but the work of Franz Gruber (music) and Joseph Mohr (words). One of the oldest of Christmas hymns is the *Triersche Christliedlein*, whose melody can be dated 1599 and may belong to the fifteenth century. Praetorius arranged it in 1609, with the words *Es ist ein Reis entsprungen*.

Martin Luther's Reformation Hymn, *Ein' feste Burg* (*A Mighty Fortress*) is based on the forty-sixth Psalm and there seems no reason to doubt that Luther himself composed the stirring melody, playing it first on his flute, from which the notes were taken down by some other musician. The date of *Ein' feste Burg* is probably 1530, and the melody was published by 1538 in a Strassburg collection of *Psalmen und geistliche Lieder*. Bach made an entire cantata out of this chorale, *In Festo Reformationis*, and also used it elsewhere. The tune is in the Finale of Mendelssohn's *Reformation Symphony*, a *Festival Overture* by Nicolai, another Overture by Raff, Wagner's *Kaisermarsch* and Meyerbeer's opera, *Les Huguenots*.

### GERMAN SECULAR SONGS

On the secular side of German folk-music, the world has become familiar with *O du lieber Augustin* (sometimes with *Ach* as its exclamation), which is now Americanized as *The More We Get Together*, for service clubs, etc.

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The song is older than 1800, and the original Augustine is said to have been a wandering minstrel who died in Vienna in 1678. Weckerlin gives an Alsatian version, and the tune has been called "Bohemian." It was at one time a favorite waltz for variations on different instruments.

*Du, du liegst mir im Herzen* is another general favorite, appearing in German song-books as *Liebe und Sehnsucht* (*Love and Longing*). It is of North German origin, dating from about 1820. From the Swabian Remsthal comes the popular dialect song, *Muss i' denn, muss i' denn zum Städtele 'naus* (*Must I then Leave the Little Town?*), widely played as a parting song for soldiers and travelers in general. Silcher printed it in his collection of German folk-songs, and it appeared also in a Liederspiel, *Stadt und Land* (*City and Country*) which gave it a great reputation. The tune was used by Hoffmann for a children's song, *Nachtigall, Nachtigall, wie singst du so schön!* (*Nightingale, how beautifully you sing!*). There is also a sedate High German version, *Muss ich denn, muss ich denn zum Dörflein hinaus*, with a different tune.

Most people have heard *Zu Lauterbach hab' i' mei' Strumpf verlore'* (*In Lauterbach I Lost my Stocking*) which appears likewise in Bavarian and north German versions. The melody is earlier than 1820, and may belong to the Rhineland or Thuringia. In Upper Bavaria it is associated with the type of dance known as *Schnaderbüpfel*. There are actually three places in Germany called Lauterbach, one in the Saxon Voigtland, one in Würtemberg's Hes-

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sen, and one on the island of Rügen. Stockings have been found in all of them.

Another dialect song is *Mädele ruck, ruck, ruck*, (*Little Girl, Move, Move, Move*) also called *Die Auserwählte* (*The Chosen One*). It belongs to Swabia, and is in the Silcher collection. The first stanza is older than the rest. Similar, but of tragic significance, is *Die Schwermütige* (*The Disconsolate Girl*) whose words begin *Mei' Mutter mag mi' net* (*My mother doesn't like me*). It has two different tunes, one of which contains an almost religious feeling, and Silcher dates it about 1830 or earlier.

The use of the famous *Fuchslied* (*Freshman Song*) by Brahms has already been mentioned (see page 220). Its tune belongs to the eighteenth century, and was originally called *Bei Hall ist eine Mühl'* (*At Hall There is a Mill*). Jena University seems first to have used it as a hazing song, *Beim Fuchsritt zu singen* (*To be Sung at the Fox-riding*) and it quickly spread to all the other German institutions of learning. There is a sprinkling of French words in the text (*Was kommt dort von der Höh'?*)

An Austrian folk-song, *Kommt ein Vogel geflogen* (*A Bird Comes a-Flying*) is of interest as representing the melody first learned at the piano by most German children, and used as a basis for elaborate orchestral variations by Siegfried Ochs. There is also the familiar ABC tune, sometimes credited to Mozart, which American youngsters have sung to the words, "One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, All good children go to Heaven."

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*Sandmännchen*, the best folk-song concerning the Sandman, with words by Schumann's friend Zuccalmaglio, was arranged by Brahms. Friedrich Kücken's *Ach, wie ist's möglich dann?* (familiarly translated as *How Can I Leave Thee?*) is generally considered a folk-song, although the melody seems to have been his own. He wrote many others that were extraordinarily popular during the nineteenth century. In the same class is *Verlassen* (*For-saken*) by Thomas Koschat, a dialect song that is still a close harmony favorite.

### STORIES OF FRENCH MUSIC

The outstanding song of France is of course the *Marseillaise*, which has been enthusiastically adopted by the whole world. Full credit for both words and music is given to Claude Joseph Rouget de Lisle, although there have been arguments, particularly concerning the tune.

The story is that Rouget de Lisle, a captain of engineers quartered at Strassburg, was asked by the Mayor, Dietrich, to write a patriotic song for the soldiers who were about to depart to join Luckner's Army of the Rhine. He went home to his lodgings, in the Maison Böckel, 12 Grande Rue, and there, with the help of a violin, composed the song that was soon to sweep all Europe. He added a "symphony" of the most commonplace type, which is a strange anticlimax to the great melody. This was during the night of April 24, 1792.

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*La Marseillaise*

The musical score consists of eight staves of music in common time, treble clef, and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The lyrics are written below each staff in French. The melody is rhythmic, featuring eighth and sixteenth notes.

Al-lons en - fants de la pa - tri - - e Le jour de  
gloire est ar-ri-vé. Contre nous de la tyran-ni - e L'é-ten-  
dart sang-lant est lé - vé, l'é-ten - dart sang-lant est lé -  
ve. En-ten-dez vous dans ces cam - pa-gnes Mu-  
gir ces fe-ro - ces sol - dats, Ils vien - nent jus-que dans vos  
bras E-gor-ger vos fils, vos cam-pa-gnes! Aux ar - mes ci-toy-  
ens! For - mez vos ba-tail-lons. Mar - chez, mar - chez,  
qu'un sang im - pur A - breu - ve nos sil - lons.

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(There are picturesque little touches to the story, such as that the Mayor, at dinner that evening, brought out his last bottle of rare old Rhine wine to help stimulate the composer, who, after he had finished his task, fell asleep, exhausted, with his head on his desk.)

In any case, Rouget de Lisle brought the Mayor the completed song on the following morning, and Dietrich was delighted. The original edition, printed at Strassburg, has the title *Chant de guerre pour l'armée du Rhin, dédié au Maréchal Lukner*. It was sung in Dietrich's house on April 25, immediately arranged for military band, and played by the band of the Garde Nationale at a review on the following Sunday, April 29.

Less than two months later a singer named Mireur sang it at a civic banquet in Marseilles. It made such an effect that copies were printed and distributed to the volunteers of the battalion about to leave for Paris. They sang it as they entered Paris, July 30, and it carried them to the attack on the Tuileries on August 10. Thus it received the name of *La Marseillaise*.

Curiously enough, Rouget de Lisle incurred the displeasure of the revolutionists and spent two years in prison, being released only after the fall of Robespierre. His own mother was an ardent royalist, and said to her son, "What do people mean by associating our name with the revolutionary hymn which those brigands sing?"

Rouget de Lisle was reduced to poverty in his later years, but eventually decorated with the ribbon of the

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Legion of Honor and assisted by several pensions. He died in 1836.

The claims of others to authorship of the *Marseillaise* need not be taken very seriously. There is an absurd story of an eccentric violinist named Alexandre Boucher, who composed the melody for a regiment leaving Marseilles. He happened to sit next to Rouget de Lisle at a dinner in Paris some years later, and heard from him the confession that he was not really responsible for the tune, but had heard it while in prison. Boucher then admitted it as his own inspiration, but generously gave up all claim to the music. Since the *Marseillaise* had been definitely credited to Rouget de Lisle long before he went to prison, the story is obviously fictitious.

It has been suggested that the melody was taken from an old German hymn, whose style, however, it does not in the least resemble. It has been compared with the Bavarian folk-song, *Stand ich auf hohen Bergen*, several versions of which have been examined, without showing any similarity, and falsely identified with the Credo in a *Mass* by Holtzmann, composed in 1776. A composer named Navoigille was finally advanced as the real creator of *La Marseillaise*, but this claim also has been disproved. The winner: Rouget de Lisle!

Schumann's reference to the *Marseillaise* in his *Faschingsschwank aus Wien* and his effective use of the melody in *The Two Grenadiers* have already been mentioned (see p. 130). He also introduced it in his Overture to *Hermann und Dorothea*. Salieri had it in the opening chorus of his

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opera, *Palmira*, and a still more obscure composer, Grison, in the introduction to an oratorio, *Esther*. The famous picture by Pils, of Rouget de Lisle singing the *Marseillaise* to his fellow-officers, is hung in the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts.

Closely associated with the French Revolution also is the *Ça ira*, which was probably heard first in October, 1789, when the Parisians marched to Versailles, and thus became the first musical expression of protest against the monarchy. The title comes from a favorite saying of Benjamin Franklin, at each stage of the American Revolution, which was repeated by General Lafayette to a street singer named Ladré, who made up the rest of the words. The tune was the work of Bécour or Bécourt, a drummer at the Opéra, and was originally very popular as a contredanse entitled *Carillon National*. Although definitely instrumental in character, it was fitted with the street-singer's words and became immensely popular with the revolutionists. The burden became increasingly ferocious, with such thoughts as, "Les aristocrates à la lanterne, Ah! ça ira, ça ira, ça ira! Les aristocrates on les pendra." England took up the tune and the words, and the song appeared in an opera called *The Picture of Paris*, produced at Covent Garden in 1790. Later it was known as a piano piece, with variations, under the title of *The Fall of Paris*, or *The Downfall of Paris*.

The *Carmagnole* also was originally an instrumental tune, with various words to express the spirit of the

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Revolution. It originated in Provence, although Grétry considered it a sailor's song of Marseilles. Actually it probably began as a country dance or roundelay, to which patriotic words were added, glorifying "the sound of the cannon." In its bloodiest form the song became the *Carmagnole des Royalistes*, and figured prominently in the worst scenes of the Terror. But later it was often used in vaudeville, without a thought of anything but innocent gaiety.

The *Marche Lorraine* contains the old French folk-song, *Avec mes Sabots*, modernized by Louis Ganne. This air was originally intended for dancing, and dates back to the sixteenth century. After the German occupation of Lorraine, in 1870, it was forbidden to be sung there, but when the Allied Army, under Marshal Foch, marched into Metz, it was to the tune of the *Marche Lorraine*.

Of other French folk-music, familiar titles include *Au Clair de la Lune* (attributed to Lully), *Sur le Pont d'Avignon*, and the universally popular round, *Frère Jacques*, which is sung by the children of all the world as a first lesson in harmony. France also has her *Bergerettes*, collected by Weckerlin, with such favorites as *Maman, dites-moi*, *Lisette*, and the *Menuet* of Joseph Exaudet, to which Favart wrote the words.

There are *Chansons* of various types, treating of historical events, of love and of war, often with satirical touches. Yvette Guilbert popularized many of these in modern times, including the *Chanson à Boire* and *Chanson à Manger*. The popular *Chant du Départ*, now considered a

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national air of France, was written for the fourth anniversary of the taking of the Bastille, July 14, 1794. The music is by Méhul, and the words by Marie Joseph Chénier, who was in hiding at the time and whose name is omitted from the original edition. It is the only French song of patriotic significance actually composed during the Terror.

Out of the Revolution of 1830 came two songs, both now considered national airs of France, *La Parisienne* and *Les Trois Couleurs*. The first celebrates the triumph of the Orleanist party, the second glorifies democracy in the name of France itself. Auber arranged the melody of *La Parisienne*, from a folk-tune of the seventeenth century, fitted with words by Casimir Delavigne, librarian of the Palais Royal, who wrote them the day after the defeat of Charles X. It was publicly performed on the same bill with Auber's *Massaniello*. Two Adolphe were responsible for *Les Trois Couleurs*, Blanc writing the words and Vogel the music. It celebrated the fall of the white flag and return of the tricolor.

One of the oldest and most famous of the French *Chansons* has the little *Vive Henri IV* and was probably written in the first decade of the seventeenth century, although its authorship was claimed by Collé over a century later. The three couplets of this historic song were handed down from generation to generation, and the song became a national anthem of royalty at the time of the Bourbon restoration. On the day that the Allied Armies entered Paris, April 1, 1814, the opera was

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Spontini's *La Vestale*, to which the orchestra played *Vive Henri IV* as an Overture. It created tremendous enthusiasm, and was demanded again at the end of the performance, when Lays sang it "to rapturous applause."

### ITALY'S BEST KNOWN TUNES

Outside of grand opera, Italian music is best known today by the Neapolitan "folk-songs," most of which are of fairly modern origin and the work of definite individuals. They originated, as a rule, in the annual contests held at Naples, and often commented upon topics of the day. Thus the famous *Funiculì Funiculà* refers to the opening of the funicular railway up Mt. Vesuvius in 1880, and is the original composition of Luigi Denza, who by that time had become a resident of London, where he taught singing and conducted at the Academy of Music. Richard Strauss, under the impression that *Funiculì Funiculà* was an actual folk-song, quoted it in his orchestral suite, *Aus Italien*. It has become a favorite with American luncheon-clubs, using English words.

There was a Neapolitan song about the telephone (*Lo Telefono*) when it first came into general use (also by Denza), and of course the best known of them all is *Santa Lucia*. The name is that of the patron saint of Naples, and also applies to the dock from which the boats leave for the island of Capri. It is definitely a

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boat song, with the motion of waves in its music, which has likewise been credited to Denza.

The other name that stands out in the creation of the Neapolitan songs is that of Edward di Capua. He wrote the popular *O Sole Mio (My Sunshine)* to words by G. Capurro, and also has to his credit the gay melody of *Maria, Mari*, for which V. Russo supplied the text. (These Italians seem to prefer initials to full names.) *Margarita*, another fast-moving ditty, has music by V. Fassone and words by P. Cinquegrana.

*Garibaldi's Hymn* is generally considered the national anthem of Italy, with the *Marcia Reale* as an almost equally important air. The hymn celebrates the rise of United Italy, and was written in 1859, the words by Mercantini, the music by Olivieri. Its popularity, however, dates from its use by the armies of the great General Garibaldi between 1877 and 1882, and it was then that it received its permanent title.

Today Italy sings the Fascist Hymn, *Giovinezza*, which was sung by the Fascisti under Mussolini when they marched on Rome in the "bloodless revolution" of 1922. Manni and Gastaldo, respectively the author and composer of the song, emphasized the importance of the younger generation in this movement, driving it home with their refrain, "Youth! Youth! Springtime of beauty!"

## XXII

### *Famous American Songs*



HIS final chapter could well be a book in itself. But most of its materials are already sufficiently known to justify the necessary condensation.<sup>1</sup>

Since Admiral Dewey declared *The Star Spangled Banner* our national anthem, at the time of the Spanish War (a declaration later officially confirmed), it presents the logical starting-point. Every schoolboy knows how the words came to be written by Francis Scott Key, during the bombardment of Fort McHenry, near Baltimore, September 13, 1814. The young Baltimore lawyer went to the British Admiral, under a flag of truce, to arrange for the release of a certain Dr. Beanes, of Virginia, who was being held as a prisoner. But as the British were about to start their bombardment, they held Key over-

<sup>1</sup> Stories of American music, particularly the popular songs of past generations, will be found in the author's three collections: *Read 'em and Weep*; *Weep Some More, My Lady*; and *Gentlemen, be Seated*.

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night on his own ship, and after a night of watchful waiting, he saw the American flag still flying from the fortress. Immediately inspired, he wrote his poem, *The Defense of Fort McHenry*, on the back of an envelope.

It has never been proved that Key had in mind the tune now known as *The Star Spangled Banner*, although it was very popular at the time, or that he thought of his words as in any way suitable for singing. Some say that the printer, Benjamin Edes, who set it up as a handbill, recognized its musical possibilities and immediately added the tune. There is another story that two brothers, Charles and Ferdinand Durang, actors and soldiers at the time, found the melody in a volume of flute music and were the first to sing it.

The air itself has been claimed as originally old French. But certainly it was known in England and America as *To Anacreon in Heaven*, constitutional song of the Anacreontic Society of London, a jovial group of musicians and men about town who met at the Crown and Anchor tavern in the Strand. Their patron saint was the Greek poet Anacreon, who wrote mostly of wine, women, and song and choked to death on a grape-seed at the age of eighty-five.

Ralph Tomlinson, President of the Society, wrote the original convivial text, and the music is correctly credited to John Stafford Smith, composer to His Majesty's Chapel, dating from about 1775. (His predecessor, Samuel Arnold, has often wrongly been called the composer.)

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The tune became so well known in America that Robert Treat Paine used it for his campaign song, *Adams and Liberty*. A few years later it became *Jefferson and Liberty*, American politics being what they are. A new set of words, *The Battle of the Wabash*, appeared in 1811, to add to the fame of William Henry Harrison. Altogether there were twenty-one different texts to this one famous tune, some, like *When Bibo Went Down to the Regions Below*, quite ribald in character. Someone has referred to the *Anacreon* melody as a "hunting-song." It had about as much to do with hunting as the nineteenth hole has with golf.

Next in line is *Yankee Doodle*, a grand fife-tune for marching, regardless of its origin. It is agreed that this melody came to America through a Dr. Richard Shuckburg, in 1755, when General Braddock was gathering Colonial soldiers near Albany for an attack on the French and Indians at Niagara. The "old continentals in their ragged regimentals" were considered something of a joke (until they showed Braddock how to fight Indians), and Dr. Shuckburg, the British army surgeon, gave them the traditional *Yankee Doodle* chorus as "the latest martial music of merry England." It was taken seriously by the bands and played twenty-five years later at the surrender of Cornwallis.

Dr. Shuckburg may have had in mind a satirical verse that was sung, according to tradition, when Oliver Cromwell rode into the town of Oxford, upon a "Kentish pony," with a feather in his cap, tied by a knot that

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was known as "a macaroni." The tune is also said to have been used for the old English nursery rhyme, "Lucy Locket lost her pocket." But where the music actually started is still shrouded in mystery.

In Holland there is an old reapers' song, beginning "Yanker, dudel, dudel down, didel, dudel, lanther," indicating that the laborers received "as much buttermilk as they could drink, and a tenth of the grain" ("botermilk und tanther"). But it has been claimed that the melody is "a popular air of Biscay," a sword dance "played on solemn occasions by the people of San Sebastian," "music of the free Pyrenees," and "the heroic Danza Esparta of brave old Biscay." Hungarians, hearing it on a Mississippi River Steamer, "immediately recognized it as one of the old national airs of their native land," and "began to caper and dance as they had been accustomed to do in Hungary." France has claimed the tune as "an old vintage song," and Italy also put in a tentative bid.

The late O. G. Sonneck, one of those merciless scholars who dispose of most of the pretty stories of music and literature, eliminated practically all these guesses. But he admits the Shuckburg joke, although the doctor was attached to the forces of either General Amherst or General Abercrombie, and shows that the tune was often used by British soldiers to taunt the Americans. One of their favorite pastimes was to sing it very loud outside the New England churches while the congregation was struggling with psalms inside. He thinks the

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long series of verses of supposedly comic character, may have been written at the "Provincial Camp" near Cambridge, about 1775, possibly by Edward Bangs, of Harvard's class of 1777.<sup>1</sup>

Another important patriotic song of early American days is *Hail, Columbia*, originally known as the *President's March*. The music was composed in honor of George Washington (possibly for his inauguration) and credit has been given to a German teacher of music, Johannes Roth, who lived in Philadelphia, and, perhaps more properly, to Philip Phile (or Phyla), of the same city. (Custis, the adopted son of Washington, referred to "a German named Fayles," who may have been the same man.)

It is quite definite, however, that the words were supplied by Joseph Hopkinson, son of Francis Hopkinson, a signer of the Declaration of Independence, who has been called "the first native American composer."<sup>2</sup>

### THE STORY OF HAIL, COLUMBIA

The youthful Hopkinson's own account of his writing of *Hail, Columbia* is worth quoting in part: "*Hail, Columbia* was written in the summer of 1789, when war with France was thought to be inevitable. Congress

<sup>1</sup> The Dutch word "Yanker" is a mark of contempt and seems to have been applied to the Puritans in the struggle between Connecticut and New Amsterdam. Washington Irving pretended that it was an Indian coinage.

<sup>2</sup> Francis Hopkinson was a great friend of Washington, to whom he dedicated a collection of his songs. His best known song is *My Days have been so Wondrous Free*.

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was then in session in Philadelphia, debating upon that important subject, and acts of hostility had actually taken place." He then tells of a young Philadelphia singer, Gilbert Fox, who was "about to take a benefit." "His prospects were very disheartening; but he said that if he could get a patriotic song adapted to the *President's March*, he did not doubt a full house; that the poets of the theatrical corps had been trying to accomplish it, but had not succeeded. I told him I would try what I could do for him. He came the next afternoon, and the song, such as it is, was ready for him. The object of the author was to get up an American spirit which should be independent of, and above the interests, passion and policy of both belligerents, and look and feel exclusively for our honor and rights. No allusion is made to France or England, or the quarrel between them, or to the question of which was most in fault in their treatment of us. Of course the song found favor with both parties, for both were American; at least neither could disown the sentiments and feelings it indicated. Such is the history of this song, which has endured infinitely beyond the expectation of the author, as it is beyond any merit it can boast of, except that of being truly and exclusively patriotic in its sentiment and spirit."

The song was advertised for publication two days after the concert as "the very New Federal Song, written to the tune of the President's March, by J. Hopkinson, Esq. And sung by Mr. Fox, at the New Theater with great applause, ornamented with a very elegant portrait

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of the President." It held its own with *The Star Spangled Banner* as our leading national anthem until the late nineties.

The year that Francis Scott Key died, 1843, saw the creation of another Columbia song, generally known as *The Red, White and Blue*, but actually called *Columbia, the Gem of the Ocean* (and also identified as *The Army and Navy Song*). Its authorship has been much disputed, with England and America making equally insistent claims.

The two men most frequently mentioned as creators of the song are David T. Shaw and Thomas a'Becket, both of Philadelphia, with the evidence in favor of the latter. He states that while engaged as an actor at the Chestnut St. Theater he received a call from Mr. Shaw, who was singing at the Chinese Museum. Like Mr. Fox, of *Hail, Columbia*, Mr. Shaw was about to have a benefit, and wanted a patriotic song to draw the crowd. His own words, which he submitted to Mr. a'Becket, were pretty terrible, so they went to the home of a Mr. Harford, who had a piano, and there a'Becket wrote the music and words of two stanzas, later adding a third. Shaw made a success with it, and calmly sold it to a publisher named Willig, merely crediting a'Becket with the arrangement. A week after discovering this treachery, a'Becket himself had the song published as his own, "sung by D. T. Shaw." Eventually, however, his publisher, Osborn, failed, and a'Becket lost all control of the song.

It was regularly sung in London by the noted actor, E. L. Davenport, and published in England under the

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title of *Britannia, the Pride of the Ocean*. Whether this occurred before or after the American version has never been settled, but the British claim is that the words were written by Stephen B. Meany, in 1842, and set to music by Thomas E. Williams. In support of this, one English commentator expresses himself thus: "The word Britannia fits the meter, whereas Columbia is a lumbering word which cannot be pronounced in less than four syllables [oh, reahllly?] . . . that while an island may properly be styled a 'gem of the ocean,' the phrase would have been absurd when applied to the United States of that day, and is even more incorrect now when the vast mass of land comprised in its territory is only partly surrounded by three oceans; and there are two Columbias, the South American Columbia and British Columbia. The United States of America was never known by such a title."

It has even been argued that the order of mentioning the colors, "red, white and blue," does not properly apply to the American flag, but would fit the English. Imagine! England substituted the name of Nelson for that of Washington (or vice-versa) and the score remains a tie.<sup>1</sup>

### DIXIE'S HISTORY

The song that ranks with all these national airs, and offers an even more interesting history, is of course *Dixie's Land*, now generally shortened to *Dixie*. Un-

<sup>1</sup> See also the story of *America* and *God Save the King*, pp. 289 ff.

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questionably it was written by the minstrel, Daniel Decatur Emmett, a member of Dan Bryant's company in New York. (He was also the composer of *Old Dan Tucker* and other popular songs.)

Interviewed in his declining years, Emmett himself told the story of *Dixie* in these words: "Like most everything else I ever did, it was written because it had to be done. One Saturday night, in 1859, as I was leaving Bryant's Theater, where I was playing, Bryant called after me, 'I want a walk-round for Monday, Dan.' The next day it rained, and I stayed indoors. At first when I went at the song I couldn't get anything. But a line, 'I wish I was in Dixie,' kept repeating itself in my mind, and I finally took it for my start. The rest wasn't long in coming. And that's the whole story of how *Dixie* was written.

"It made a hit at once, and before the end of the week everybody in New York was whistling it. Then the South took it up and claimed it for its own. I sold the copyright for five hundred dollars, which was all I ever made from it."

Emmett was not only a clever composer of minstrel songs, but a singer as well, and a good performer on the violin, flute, and other instruments. At one time he traveled with a circus as a drummer, and it is said that the people in this show, while in the cold weather of the North, would often use the expression, "I wish I was in Dixie." But this still does not explain how the name came to be applied to the South. It is generally assumed

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to have something to do with Mason and Dixon's line, but there is no proof that this is true, or that the word was well known in the South before Emmett's song appeared. The most logical explanation may be that the ten-dollar bills in New Orleans were marked DIX, and therefore known as "Dixies," and that the word gradually came to cover the whole South. This gains in significance when it is remembered that the first southern performance of *Dixie* was in New Orleans, where Carlo Patti, leader of the orchestra at the Varieties Theater, introduced it for a zouave march in the play of *Pocahontas*. When Susan Denin sang it, with the marching soldiers, the audience went wild. A local publisher pirated the song, and it quickly spread through the South. The Washington Artillery had the tune arranged as a quickstep, and Picket ordered it played before his famous charge at Gettysburg. General Albert Pike wrote some additional verses, which were no improvement on Dan Emmett's. Fanny Crosby gave it a set of northern words, but they did not supplant the original version. *Dixie* was a campaign song in 1860. In 1865, a short time after the surrender at Appomattox, Lincoln was serenaded at the White House, only a few days before his assassination. Appearing for a brief speech, the President said: "I see you have a band with you. I should like to hear it play *Dixie*. I have consulted the Attorney General, who is here by my side, and he is of the opinion that *Dixie* belongs to us. Now play it." (One version of the story quotes Lincoln as saying that "as we have captured the

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rebel army, we have also captured the rebel tune.") Today it is as popular in the North as in the South.

Dan Emmett lived to be eighty-nine years old, and made a tour with a minstrel show when he was past eighty. But he died in poverty in 1904, in his home town of Mt. Vernon, Ohio, barely supporting himself by raising chickens, with contributions from friends and the Actors' Fund. It is perhaps significant that *Dixie* and *Yankee Doodle* can be played together, using only the first half of each tune, in at least an adequate counter-point, to which *Home, Sweet Home* may be added as extra harmony.

### THE BATTLE HYMN OF THE REPUBLIC

The other great song of the Civil War was *John Brown's Body*, turned into the *Battle Hymn of the Republic* by Julia Ward Howe. The original tune was composed by a certain William Steffe, about 1856, as a hymn, *Say, Brothers, Will You Meet Us?*, particularly popular in negro congregations and with firemen, especially the refrain of "Glory, Glory, Hallelujah." After the John Brown raid, Miss Edna Dean Proctor gave the melody some dignified words, which were revised in a more popular style by Charles S. Hall. The northern soldiers used it for various parodies, including *Hang Jeff Davis on a Sour Apple Tree*.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> It is still a favorite tune for topical verses, serving, among others, as *One Grasshopper Jumped Right over the Other Grasshopper's Back*.

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Mrs. Howe got her inspiration in 1861, when she heard a group of soldiers singing *John Brown's Body*, and was asked by the Reverend James Freeman Clark why she did not try to give the popular tune a really worthy text. The line, "Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord" occurred to her that same night, and she is said to have groped for a pencil and paper and written out practically the whole poem before dawn. It was published in the *Atlantic Monthly* of February, 1862, and soon reprinted in many newspapers, finally appearing in the army hymn-books. Chaplain McCabe, of the 122d Ohio Volunteer Infantry, carried the song to the front and into Libby Prison, where it consoled the wretched victims in their last hours. After his release, he is said to have sung it for President Lincoln in Washington, who, with tears rolling down his cheeks, cried, "Sing it again!"

Julia Ward Howe lived to be ninety-one years old, and was made a Doctor of Letters by Smith College shortly before her death in 1910. Her characteristic comment was: "My poem did some service in the Civil War. I wish very much that it may do good service in the Peace, which, I pray God, may never more be broken."

*The Battle Cry of Freedom*, sometimes confused with Mrs. Howe's *Battle Hymn*, is the work of that fine American song-writer, George Frederic Root, and is also known by the phrase from its opening line, *Rally Round the Flag, Boys*. Root was a singer, associated with Lowell Mason in school music, and a music publisher in

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Chicago. He composed his best known song in 1861, when Lincoln had sent out his second call for volunteers.

It was first sung at a public meeting in Chicago, and then in Union Square, New York, by the Hutchinson family, a famous group of singers in its day. Army men are said to have picked it up from schoolchildren while on the march. There is a story that a few days after Lee's surrender, a quartet of northern soldiers sang *The Battle Cry of Freedom* and other Union songs for some Confederate officers stationed near by, and were told by a southern major, "Gentlemen, if we'd had your songs, we'd have licked you out of your boots!"

George Root also composed the words and music of *Tramp, Tramp, Tramp, the Boys are Marching* and that other popular war song, *Just before the Battle, Mother*. He was likewise responsible for *There's Music in the Air*, still a favorite among the colleges, and revised at Princeton as the *Whoop her up* song.<sup>1</sup>

*Marching through Georgia*, which is not officially recognized by the state which it names, was the creation of Henry Clay Work, an ardent abolitionist and prohibitionist. He contributed the best known of all the dry songs, *Come Home, Father* (beginning "Father, dear Father, come home to me now") but also composed the lively *Year of Jubilo (Kingdom Coming)* and the eternally popular *Grandfather's Clock*. His tune called *The Ship That Never Returned* was used for the "hill-billy"

<sup>1</sup> The debt of Hawaii's *Aloha Oe* to *There's Music in the Air* has been mentioned (see p. 282).

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classic, *The Wreck of the Old '97*, whose text caused some surprising litigation in recent years. *Wake, Nicodemus*, *Babylon is Fallen*, and *Lily Dale* are other well-known Work songs.

Henry C. Work came closer than any other composer to the genius that inspired the one and only Stephen Collins Foster, who remains America's best loved musician to the rest of the world, as well as to his own country. Foster's life was a sad one, and he died in poverty and neglect at the early age of thirty-eight.

### FOSTER'S OUTSTANDING SONGS

Foster's greatest song is generally conceded to be *Old Folks at Home*, also known as *Swanee River*. There is a familiar story to the effect that the river originally was called "Pedee," a name which Foster himself liked less and less. Finally he had his brother run his finger over a map of Florida, calling out river names until they found the right one, "Swanee." The actual stream is of infinitesimal importance, but has become world-famous through the Foster song.

E. P. Christy, of Christy's Minstrels, had Foster compose various pieces for his use, and paid him something extra for the privilege of claiming *Old Folks at Home* as his own. It actually appeared in its original publication with the name of E. P. Christy as the composer.

Foster wrote his first song, *Open thy Lattice, Love*, at the age of sixteen. At twenty he had written *Uncle Ned, Oh, Susannah*, and several others, which appeared

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together as *Songs of the Sable Harmonists*. The totally unpractical Stephen gave these away to a Cincinnati publisher, W. C. Peters, who made ten thousand dollars out of the collection, without even giving the composer credit.

But out of *My Old Kentucky Home*, *Old Dog Tray*, and a few other songs Foster eventually made a fair amount of money in royalties. He finally sold out these interests and went to New York on a publisher's agreement to pay him \$800 a year for twelve songs, with another contract for six songs a year at \$400. But Foster found it impossible to keep himself up to this fixed output, drew on his guarantees in advance, and ended practically in the gutter.

Stephen Foster is the perfect example of the "natural" composer, and it may be doubted whether, with adequate training, he would have made as much impression on the world as with the simple folklike songs whose permanence is now well established. He had an instinctive feeling for the type of expression that appears in actual negro music, and his dialect songs are all far in advance of anything else that has been produced by white imitators. *Old Black Joe* and *Massa's in de Cold, Cold Ground* have been generally accepted as real negro folk-music, and *De Camptown Races* is closely related to an actual negro secular song, *Hoodah Day*, which Foster may unconsciously have imitated.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> It has been pointed out that there is some similarity of melodic line in *Swanee River* and the authentic spiritual, *Deep River*. The finest of the real negro

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The negro composer most frequently compared with Foster is James Bland, who wrote *Carry me back to Ole Virginny*, as well as *In the Evening by the Moonlight* and *Oh, dem Golden Slippers*. Another negro who has proved himself a fine musician, with a real command of the folk idiom, is William Christopher Handy, whose *St. Louis Blues* has become the classic of its type.

There is very little that can honestly be called "American folk-music." White men have no right to claim either the negro or the Indian music as their own, and most of the mountain and cowboy songs can be traced back to the ballads of the British Isles, brought over in the early years of immigration. The Creole music has French and Spanish backgrounds. What is left is the work of individual composers, like Foster, Work, and Bland, with a few isolated pieces whose origins cannot be traced. One of these is the popular *Turkey in the Straw*, which appears in a negro form as *Zip Coon*, but seems to have been the work of a white man.

Of a similar type is the *Arkansas Traveler*, generally considered a fiddle-tune, but also fitted with words. It has a familiar story, to the effect that a traveler in the State of Arkansas was asking for shelter on a rainy night, and was rudely rebuffed by an old man sitting under the

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tunes may be considered superior to Foster's, but they have not attained an equal popularity. There may be some significance in the fact that today many negroes consider *Goin' Home*, by William Arms Fisher, a white man's words to a white man's music (Dvořák's *Largo* from the *New World Symphony*), as an actual spiritual.

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eaves of a shack, playing the fiddle. The stranger finally asked, "Don't you know the second half of that tune?" to which the old man answered, "No, do you?" "Yes," said the stranger, who was immediately welcomed with open arms, played the rest of the music, and got a free lodging for the night. The structure of the lively melody, which shares with *Turkey in the Straw* the musical responsibilities of most barn-dances, makes this story sound quite convincing.

### OTHER AMERICAN SONGS

A song of uncertain date and origin is *Frankie and Johnnie*, which has been made into a play and a motion picture. It is agreed that it started in St. Louis, where a girl actually "shot her man," but the rest is open to argument. Most authorities now believe that Frankie and Johnnie (sometimes called Albert) were colored folks, and there is an old negro woman still living in Portland, Oregon, who claims to be the original Frankie. It has been suggested that while she may have lived up to the gory details of the story, her inspiration may have come from the song instead of vice versa. Emerson Hough insists that the song goes back to the 1840's, but Carl Sandburg and others place it much later. In any case, it can be considered a legitimate piece of American folk-music, along with a few other ballads of a similar type.

America has a right to claim *Home, Sweet Home*, since its author, John Howard Payne, was born in New York City in 1792. The melody is credited to the English Sir

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Henry Bishop, although he himself called it a "Sicilian Air." Payne went to London as a young man, and *Home, Sweet Home* first appeared in 1823, in the opera *Clari, or the Maid of Milan*. The heroine was given these lines in description of the song which Robert Louis Stevenson later described as "wallowing naked in the pathetic": "It is the song of my native village, the hymn of the lowly heart, which dwells upon every lip there, and like a spell word brings back to its home the affection which e'er has been betrayed to wander from it. It is the first music heard by infancy in its cradle; and our cottagers, blending it with all their earliest and tenderest recollections, never cease to live." It was sung again by a chorus of villagers when Clari returned to her home.

*Home, Sweet Home* became immediately popular in England and America. It was introduced into the lesson scene in Rossini's *Barber of Seville*, and was a great favorite with Jenny Lind, Christine Nilsson, and Adelina Patti.

Ironically enough, John Howard Payne spent most of his life as a homeless wanderer, meeting his death in Tunis in 1852, where he had been American consul. In his diary an entry was found: "How often have I been in the heart of Paris, Berlin, London or some other city, and have heard persons singing or hand-organs playing *Home, Sweet Home*, without having a shilling to buy myself the next meal, or a place to lay my head. The world has literally sung my song until every heart is familiar with its melody, yet I have been a wanderer from my boyhood."

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About a year before his death, Payne wrote to the Hon. C. E. Clarke, from Washington: "It affords me great pleasure to comply with your request for the words of *Home, Sweet Home*. Surely there is something strange in the fact that it should have been my lot to cause so many people in the world to boast of the delights of home, when I never had a home of my own, and never expect to have one now—especially since those here at Washington who possess the power seem so reluctant to allow me the means of earning one!"

Only a few more American songs need be mentioned. One of them is *Ben Bolt*, made famous in Du Maurier's *Trilby*, and often considered Scottish in its origin. The words were actually written by Dr. Thomas Dunn English, of New Jersey, who never received a penny in return, and rather resented the fact that this poem should have become so much more popular than what he considered his best works. *Ben Bolt* was the result of a request for a (free) "sea poem" by N. P. Willis, editor of the *New York Mirror*. It was only when Dr. English reached his final line that he remembered the nautical atmosphere that was desired, and he hastily made it, "Ben Bolt of the salt-sea gale!"

The words were set to music by Dominick May, of Baltimore, and by Dr. English himself, but neither of these tunes survived. The melody as it is known today was supplied by a strolling minstrel named Nelson Kneass, who got it "from an old German tune." An English newspaper man, A. M. Hunt, gave him a garbled

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version of the words from memory. This was still further changed by the publisher, who objected to the line "Where the children used to swim" as possibly offending the delicacy of some of his customers. This garbled version has been generally accepted as the real one.

Dr. English lived out his life as a practicing physician in Newark, New Jersey, where he died in 1902. He was much irritated by requests for autographs, and even locks of his hair, and by the fact that a sailing-ship, a steamboat, and a race-horse were all named after his unfortunate song. He used to remark grimly, "The ship was wrecked, the steamboat blew up, and the horse never won a race." After all, it took a Svengali even to make Trilby sing it properly.

*The Old Oaken Bucket*, which has supplied the American language with many a quotation, was written by Samuel Woodworth, of Scituate, Massachusetts, who for a time shared the editorship of the same *New York Mirror* for which *Ben Bolt* was originally written. The tune is known as *Araby's Daughter*, and has been adopted by Brown University for an *Alma Mater* song.

There is still a tendency to think of such songs as *A Perfect Day* (by Carrie Jacobs Bond) as folk-music. *Sylvia* and *The Road to Mandalay* are both settings by Oley Speaks, who is very much alive today and presents the unusual case of a composer who does not try to explain his inspiration in any romantic fashion. He found the words of *Sylvia*, by the late Clinton Scollard, in the *New York Times*, and simply set them to music in a way that

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millions of people have seemed to like. Kipling's *Road to Mandalay* had been previously set to music by Dyneley Prince and Walter Damrosch (who did far better with *Danny Deever*), and the Speaks music has merely had the necessary appeal to make it survive.

Ethelbert Nevin is best known by *The Rosary*, which has been perhaps the biggest seller of all American art-songs. His almost equally popular *Mighty lak a Rose* was not published until after his untimely death, in 1901, at the age of thirty-nine. Another art-song, now seriously threatening the record of the *Rosary*, is Mana-Zucca's *I Love Life*, which has become the pet demonstration number of all radio aspirants.

One modern popular song must be mentioned in closing, partly because it has already indicated that it will survive, and partly because it has an interesting history. That song is *The Long, Long Trail*. Zo Elliot and Stoddard King were students at Yale when they wrote it, and King's verses had won the Literary Prize shortly before the World War. Elliot added the tune in order to win a trip with the glee club, and then, after getting his desire, forgot all about it, since no American publisher seemed interested. Later he went to Oxford for graduate study, and there played the song to the English students. They liked it, and some of them carried it into the army when the war broke out. It was only after it had been published in England and won a huge success that *The Long, Long Trail* received recognition, and publication, in its native America.

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That story is typical of the experiences of even the great composers of music. They have their own feelings about their work, but they never can tell what the public reaction will be. The best of them have always overcome repeated failures and a complete lack of comprehension on the part of their listeners, and succeeded only through an amazing courage that would recognize no obstacles. That quality of courage seems to be the one thing that all famous composers have in common. At least it makes for excitement in the stories of their works.

SINCE this book was finished, two important American composers have died: George Gershwin, at thirty-eight, and Henry Hadley, at sixty-six. Their names belong on this final page, because they proved so clearly that a creator of music can be a normal and likable person. Their close friendship and mutual admiration also emphasized the needlessness of those petty jealousies and hostilities that have for centuries handicapped and often disgraced the art of music.

George Gershwin recognized in Henry Hadley the technical mastery and sound musicianship which he himself worked honestly to achieve. Hadley, on the other hand, saw in Gershwin the melodic inspiration and the instinct for popular expression that any serious composer might well have envied. Dr. Hadley was the founder and Honorary President of the National Association for American Composers and Conductors, of which George Gershwin was a life member. They both felt a sincere interest in the work of their contemporaries and were ready at all times to give practical help and encouragement to their less fortunate colleagues.

Gershwin's most serious offense, in the eyes of the reactionaries, was that he wrote popular music and enjoyed a solid income from his talents. Hadley was accused of being too prolific, and of suffering from a too great facility of expression. Neither indictment seems of any particular consequence now. They will be remembered by their works. But they will be remembered also as warm-hearted, generous human beings, extraordinarily free from the absurdities, the mannerisms, the hypocrisies, and the egotisms that are too often considered an inevitable accompaniment to genius.

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